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# ENGLAND, EGYPT, AND THE SUDAN

# ENGLAND, EGYPT, AND THE SUDAN

BY

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# ENGLAND, EGYPT, AND THE SUDAN

## CHAPTER I

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE KHEDIVATE

THE LAND of Egypt has been from time immemorial the temptation and the spoil of the conqueror. Its singular fertility, its defenceless position, and the weakness of a native race of inhabitants whom it has never been possible, until quite recent years, to organise for the purposes of self-protection, have attracted by turn every powerful military people in its neighbourhood, whether European, Asiatic, or African. The long history of its Ancient and Middle and New Empires is the history of successive conquests and dominations, now by African potentates and communities dwelling to the South, and now by subjugated races who rose against their conquerors. Asia, and afterwards Europe, have subjected her to the same experience. When Persia was a power overshadowing Eastern Europe, Egypt fell under her yoke; and when, after two hundred years of Persian rule, the third Darius came into collision with the all-conquering king of Macedon, Egypt passed from Asiatic into European hands. The ascent of Rome to the lordship of the Western World was the signal for another change in her rulers, and four centuries of Ptolemies were succeeded by more than six centuries of Cæsars. With the rise of Islam, in the seventh century of the Christian era, the country passed once more under the sway of a new

the great Powers—engaged during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries in wars of religion, wars of colonial rivalry, and wars of dynastic dispute; while the gradual decline in the strength and menace of her Ottoman suzerain was already beginning to draw the jealous and anxious attention of the European States to a point farther to the East. Otherwise, the growing weakness of Turkey and the practical subordination of her nominal viceroys to the Mameluke Beys who governed the various Egyptian provinces, collected the taxes, commanded the militia, and merely paid tribute to the Pasha, would doubtless have earlier merited an attempt from one or other of the great Powers to wrest this rich and historic domain of the Ottoman from his gradually failing hands. Late in the eighteenth century the time arrived. The greatest and greediest of all the conquerors of the world, looking eastward for a new empire, and for a basis of attack upon the eastern dominion of his most formidable foe, cast the eye of desire upon Egypt, and there and then began the rivalry for its possession, or, failing possession, for paramount influence therein, which has arrayed France and England against each other ever since.

The "sentimental" claim, however, which the French people consider to have been created in their favour by the Consul of 1798-1801, must be regarded as deriving rather from their romantic attachment to the memory of their great soldier, than from any very proud memories of the events themselves. For assuredly the glories of the Napoleonic expedition are not of the brightest. Napoleon's victory over the Mamelukes

mplete as the most celebrated of his fter it was won, the French fleet was the battle of the Nile. And two urn from the Syrian expedition, in , as he complained, made him miss escape, as one may almost call it, in succeeded in evading the watchful British cruisers, he was doomed to see his trusted *locum tenens* assassinated by a fanatic, his army defeated and driven by a British force to capitulation and evacuation. Great Britain, however, had far too serious preoccupations in Europe to be able to follow up her advantage. Her own withdrawal from Egypt was delayed but a year or two, and the episode, except in so far as it established, and as it were consecrated by reciprocal sacrifices in blood and treasure the rivalry between the two western Powers, had no other effect than to rehabilitate the sovereignty of the Sultan, to whom on our departure we formally restored his Pashalik.

Yet once again, however, were we to intervene within the next few years. In 1807 the Government saw fit to throw itself into the conflict which had been raging in Egypt ever since the rise of the able but cruel Albanian, Mehemet Ali, and his attempt to crush the Beys and make himself master of the country. He had already so far succeeded as to have been confirmed by the Porte in the Viceroyalty; but his authority everywhere outside of the walls of Cairo was still disputed by the Beys, and on the 17th March of the year above mentioned, a British fleet appearing off Alexandria, with a force of 5000 men, under the command of General Fraser, was received in a friendly spirit by a garrison disaffected to Mehemet Ali, and was admitted into possession of the port and town. This enterprise, however, was destined to end in disaster; and so characteristic was the first reverse that it met with, so closely and curiously, even down to the name of one of the chief victims, does it recall recent events at the other end of Africa, that we cannot

refrain from giving the following extract from General Fraser's despatch to the Secretary of State. After stating that, in view of the risk of starvation incurred by the inhabitants of Alexandria unless Rosetta and Rahmanieh were taken by His Majesty's troops, a force under Major-General Wauchope and General Meade had been detached for that purpose, General Fraser continues :—

> I am now under the disagreeable necessity of acquainting you that, contrary to all expectation, this measure did not succeed. Our troops took possession of the heights of Almamandower (which command the town) without any loss; but *from circumstances as yet unexplained*, the General, instead of keeping his post there, unfortunately was tempted to go into the town with the whole force, *without any previous examination of it*, when the troops were so severely handled from the windows and tops of the houses, *without ever seeing their enemy*, that it was thought expedient to retire, more especially as Major-General Wauchope was unfortunately killed, and the second in command, Brigadier-General Meade, severely wounded.

The years roll back indeed as we read these lines and see how fixed and enduring are the qualities of the British General, and what a striking "continuity" our strategic policy displays.

The possession of Rosetta being deemed, as has been said, to be indispensable, a larger force of 2500 men were despatched thither under General Steuart and Colonel Oswald, and bombarded the town ineffectually for thirteen days. On the 25th of April, news being received of large reinforcements having reached the besieged, General Steuart was compelled to retreat, and a dragoon was sent to the officer in command of the advance guard ordering him to fall back. The messenger, however, was unable to reach him, and the advanced guard, numbering 733 men, was surrounded, and its survivors, after a gallant resistance and the exhaustion of their ammunition, made prisoners of war. General Steuart regained Alexandria with the remainder of his force, having lost, in killed, wounded, and missing, nearly 900 men. Some hundreds of

British heads were now exposed on stakes at Cairo, and the [illegible] between these mutilated remains of their countrymen.

It was not an encouraging experience, and if the adventure had been engaged in as a step in our general anti-Napoleonic policy, it had no effect in eliciting any counter-move from France; and no doubt the English statesmanship of the period perceived in process of time that it would be as well to leave Egypt to its own devices and dissensions. Mehemet Ali was left to consolidate his power by the cold-blooded massacre of the Mamelukes in 1811, and to pursue his long career of rule for another thirty years without any interference of ours. French and English jealousy, however, again became acute in 1841, though on this occasion the cause which provoked it was one of a kind unprecedented in Egyptian history since the distant days of the Nineteenth Dynasty. For it arose from the sudden and strange re-apparition of Egypt in the form of a military and conquering Power. During a period of something like a quarter of a century the personality of a singular adventurer, whose struggles for mastery over his rivals had led to the ill-fated military operations of Great Britain above described, overshadowed the whole of the near East, and its whole destiny seemed likely to be permanently modified by the military abilities of his adopted son. Mehemet Ali after stamping out the Mamelukes in the bloody mire of the Citadel courtyard at Cairo, and creating a clear and foeless field for his ambitious projects, made it his first business—concurrently, it is true, with many enlightened undertakings for the civilisation and enrichment of the Egyptian people—to equip himself with an efficient and well-organized army. This done, he looked round for conquests, and for a capable commander to effect them. Nor was he long in finding the instrument he needed, in Ibrahim, his adopted—according to some, his begotten—son, a man in certain respects more remarkable than himself, and endowed assuredly with as fine a natural gift, not only for war-

fare, but for military administration, as the East has ever produced. Before his twenty-fifth year he had already shown something of his capacity as a soldier by his successful operations against the rebel tribes of Upper Egypt and the fugitive Mamelukes in Nubia. In 1816, when he was twenty-seven, he led an expedition into Arabia, which resulted, after a three years' campaign, in the conquest of a considerable portion of invaded territory, and in 1820 he annexed the whole of Nubia and a large part of the Sudan to the Pashalik of Egypt. Conscious of the impediments to his complete success which the want of organized discipline in his troops had interposed, he sought on his return to Cairo the assistance of French officers to train them into something like the order and steadiness of a Western force; and after giving them in 1824 some more experience in actual warfare in Greece, when he went to support the Sultan against his insurgent subjects, Ibrahim, by the end of the Greco-Turkish war and the final establishment of Greek independence, was the master of a very formidable military weapon indeed.

In 1831, by the direction of his father, he turned it against their common suzerain, and led an expedition to Syria for the conquest of that province of the Porte. Here for the next two years his career was one of brilliant and almost unbroken success. Unchecked by the loss of 5000 men from cholera before leaving Egypt, he appeared suddenly on the Syrian coast, took Gaza and Jaffa by surprise, and invested Acre. Here for the first time he met with check; but after two unsuccessful attempts to carry the place by storm he was called away to meet an army of relief, commanded by Osman Pasha, governor of Aleppo. Osman, however, dared not face him. He beat a hasty retreat, and Ibrahim, returning to Acre, made a renewed and more desperate effort to carry it, which he succeeded in doing with a loss of 1400 men. Without a pause he marched on Damascus, which offered no resistance. At Hems he encountered and defeated a Turkish army of 30,000 men with a

force of 16,000, and rapidly following up his beaten foe he overtook them, and converted their defeat into an absolute rout. Another victory followed, and finally he had his "crowning mercy" at a spot near Konieh, where he met and routed a force of 60,000 men under the Vizier Reschid. Meantime his fleet had chased that of the Sultan back to the Bosporus, and Ibrahim, without an army to oppose him, was within six marches of Constantinople. Here, however, whether from political hesitations or not, a halt was called by Mehemet, whom Ibrahim always dutifully obeyed; and this alone saved the Ottoman Empire from destruction. As it was, the catastrophe was only averted by Russia and certain other European Powers, the former bringing up her army and fleet to the protection of Constantinople; and even then the Sultan had to pay dearly for his rescue. Syria was ceded to the Pasha of Egypt in 1833, subject only to the condition of paying a tribute to the Porte, and Ibrahim was made governor of the conquered province.

Again, however, was a call to be made on his military prowess. War broke out afresh in 1839, and at Nezib Ibrahim dealt a second deadly blow at the Turkish power. Again Constantinople was actually within his grasp; but again the commands of Mehemet Ali forbade him to follow up his success, and it was in the interval of diplomacy which followed that the conflicting policies of France and England brought the two nations to the verge of war.

France had from the first given veiled, and sometimes hardly veiled, encouragement to the ambitious designs of Mehemet Ali and his warlike son. What she desired in the first place, was to interpose a strong and independent kingdom, worked upon by French influence, between Great Britain and her Asiatic possessions; and, secondly, since her recent establishment of a footing in Africa by the conquest of Algiers, it was distinctly to her interest, in view of a future eastward extension of her African domain, that the territory which she

approached should be an isolated kingdom, and not a portion of a great, if moribund empire whom many States were interested in saving from actual extinction. Which of these nations was the most potent it is hard to say; perhaps the former, but in any case there was no doubt of the fact that under their joint operation France had been throughout this trouble in a state of persistent oppugnancy to the policy of England, and of steady, if secret, co-operation with the design of the recalled Egyptian Pasha. Her position, of course, was diplomatically much weaker than that of England, who, whenever matters came to a critical state between the Sultan and the Pasha, was sure from the first of finding allies in the other Continental States. For two, at least, of these, though not as directly interested as France and England in the outcome of events as affecting the Pasha, were even more closely concerned than the two eastern Powers with the bearing of these events on the position of the Sultan. France, if she pleased, might be willing to sacrifice the Ottoman Empire in order to secure an Egypt to her liking; but neither Russia nor Austria could afford for any such reason, Egyptian or other, to have the Eastern Question opened by the complete overthrow of Turkey. The convergence of their interests with our own resulted, as might have been expected, in the formation of a league for the protection of the threatened empire. In July, 1840, it was made known that England, Russia, Austria, and Prussia, had concluded a so-called "secret" treaty or convention with the Porte, whereby it was agreed to call upon Mehemet Ali under certain conditions—among which was the hereditary settlement of the pashalik of Egypt in his family, and a life-right of administering the pashalik of Acre —to withdraw his troops from the territory of the Sultan. In the event of his refusal to comply with the demand within a specified period, and to deliver up the Turkish fleet, then in the hands of the Admiral, the above-mentioned offers were to be withdrawn; and at the same time instructions were

sent to Sir Robert Stopford, the British Admiral in command off the Syrian Coast, to take certain measures for applying coercion to the Egyptian forces if necessary.

The disclosure of this treaty, concluded, as was alleged, behind the back of France, was received with a perfect outburst of fury by that nation. That there was no foundation for the charge of secrecy or of the deliberate exclusion of France was made perfectly plain by Lord Palmerston in the explanation given by him as Foreign Minister in the House of Commons. Negotiations, it appeared, had been going on for nearly twelve months between the four great Powers and France with respect to affairs in the East, and France had been repeatedly warned that if she should find it impossible to associate herself with these Powers in carrying into effect the measures agreed upon by them, she must not be surprised if they acted without her. Two or three months before the Convention was signed a distinct arrangement was proposed to France, stating the limits to which the four Powers would go in the direction desired by her; but after two months' consideration, the French Government stated reasons why they could not be a party to it. The four Powers then determined to carry that arrangement into effect, but so far from there having been any secrecy in the matter, the draft convention was actually forwarded to France two days after its signature.

This ought, of course, to have been sufficient, but it was not. The French protested that their ambassador, M. Guizot, ought to have been informed before the treaty was signed, and M. Guizot was summoned to Paris to a conference with Louis Philippe and his Ministers. Royal ordinances were at the same time passed, calling out 150,000 additional soldiers for active service and 10,000 seamen, while five ships of the line, thirteen frigates, and nine steamers were put into readiness for action. The French press clamoured for war; inflammatory pamphlets were published in Paris breathing bitter animosity against England, and M. Thiers did his best to fan the

flame with his pugnacious eloquence. It is a wonder that war was escaped; but fortunately war cannot be made in a day, and before the commanded preparations could be carried out, France had breathing time in which to reflect upon the insanity of pushing further a quarrel which might have landed her in a war with four great Powers and the Ottoman Empire. Meanwhile, the demand was presented to and pressed upon Mehemet Ali. The British and Austrian fleets made a demonstration on the Syrian coast, but it became necessary for Admiral Stopford to bombard Beirut, and for a mixed force of British, Austrian, and Turkish troops to carry Saida by assault, before the Pasha could be prevailed upon to yield and to retire within his own proper dominions, and formally to acknowledge the suzerainty of the Porte. The conditions of the Treaty were duly carried out and the Viceroyalty was made hereditary in his family. During the short remainder of his life he devoted himself to the internal development of the country, among the wisest and most beneficent of his measures being the project for the construction of the barrage of the Nile just below the point of its bifurcation, a work which was executed in 1842. Thenceforward Mehemet Ali ceased to be a cause of European trouble, or an irritant of international jealousy between England and France. In 1848 his mind failed, and the Government was assumed by his son Ibrahim, who himself, however, died of a pulmonary complaint some months before his father, in November, 1848. A grandson of Mohammed Abbas, son of Tussun, succeeded him, and after a five-years' reign was assassinated by his slaves. The next in succession was Said, a man of sense, enlightenment, and public spirit, whose reign would in any case have been most remarkable for the inception of the great work which has so profoundly influenced the destinies of Egypt and affected its relations to the European and Asiatic worlds.

The original idea of the Suez Canal is, of course, many centuries older than M. Ferdinand de Lesseps. It was

mooted as long ago as the date of the Mohammedan conquest, and it was probably only the opposition of the Caliph Omar which prevented an attempt at the work. But M. de Lesseps, no doubt, deserves all the credit due to a projector who is able to reduce a vast theoretical conception to a practical shape, and to convince practical men of the possibility of carrying it out. From 1849 to 1854 he had been engaged in maturing his project, and it speaks much for Said Pasha's enlightenment that one of his first acts on his succession to the Viceroyalty was to send for the distinguished French engineer, and consult him on the matter. M. de Lesseps then propounded to the Viceroy his scheme for constructing a waterway between the head of the Red Sea and the Bay of Pelusium. He undertook to cut through the 90 miles of sand which divided the two seas, to deepen the shallow waters wherever necessary, and to create ports of adequate capacity to receive ships of ocean-going draught and tonnage from India and Australia. On the 30th November, 1854, a concession was signed at Cairo empowering M. de Lesseps to form a company to carry the scheme into effect. The next step was the appointment of an international commission to consider the *modus operandi;* but the body, though they were unanimous as to the practicability of the undertaking, differed as to the mode in which the canal should be constructed—the English members of the Commission being of opinion that a ship canal, having its surface raised 25 feet above the sea-level and communicating with the Bay of Pelusium at one end and the Red Sea at the other by means of locks, and supplied with water from the Nile, was the best mode of construction; while the foreign members, on the contrary, held that a canal having a bottom 27 feet below the sea-level, from sea to sea, without any lock, and with harbours at each end, was the best system, the harbours to be formed by piers and dredging out to deep water. The Commission met at Paris in June, 1856, when the views of the English engineers were rejected, and the

report to the Viceroy recommended the system which has since been carried out.

Several years, however, had to pass, and various obstacles, financial and otherwise, to be overcome before the work could be commenced. Four years were spent in conferences and preliminary steps before M. Lesseps obtained the necessary funds for proceeding with the enterprise. About half the capital was subscribed on the Continent, the larger portion of which was taken in France, and the other half was found by the Viceroy. More time having been unavoidably lost in preparation, it was not till near the close of 1860 that the work was actually commenced.

England held aloof, and the most popular English statesman of the day expressed himself strongly in disfavour of the scheme. It was unlike both the nation and the man to show less confidence than other nations and their rulers in the success of a bold engineering enterprise. Lord Palmerston's opposition to the project has often been misrepresented, and it may be as well here, therefore, to quote his own account of its motives as stated by him in a letter to Lord John Russell. The Suez Canal scheme, he points out, might be looked at under three aspects: first, that of the practicability, financial and mechanical, of its construction; secondly, that of the commercial advantage of it if completed; and thirdly, that of its effect upon politics. He goes on to discuss the second aspect of the question, and considers that, looking at the matter purely with reference to the commerce of Europe, any great work which would shorten considerably the voyage to India would be advantageous to all nations trading by sea to Asia. On the question of practicability, however, his mind is distinctly made up. After referring to the fact that "the Lesseps Company have now been ostensibly at work for nearly ten years" (which must surely have been a slip of the pen for ten months) "at a canal that is to be 100 feet wide and 30 feet deep from sea to sea, with

ports for sea-going ships on the Mediterranean and Red Sea ends," he remarks that "up to this moment, though a very large part of their nominal capital has been spent, not one single spadeful has been turned up for the construction of this canal."

Lesseps has begun what he calls his *rigole*, a boat canal twelve feet wide and four feet deep, of which one third, beginning from the north, has been completed. A second third may be completed in the next spring, or early summer, and the remaining third would be more easily finished by letting the water of the Red Sea into a salt marsh, some way to the north of Suez. Lesseps is eager about this, because he thinks his shares would rise in the market at Paris if he could show that he had actually floated a boat from sea to sea. But he will not tell his shareholders—what is, nevertheless, the fact—that this boat canal, or *rigole*, is not to form any part of the ship canal: the ship canal is to be dug in a line parallel to the boat canal, and the boat canal is only to be used, like a railway, for the easier conveyance of workmen, provision, and materials, as the great work goes on. I understand that there is scarcely one among the French engineers employed who would not, if he told the truth, acknowledge that the ship canal could not be made without an amount of money and a period of time far exceeding the calculations hitherto made, and that, if accomplished, it never could be made to pay interest on the cost.

What a blush must this bring to the cheek of a British Chancellor of the Exchequer of the present day!

It may safely be said, therefore, that, as a commercial undertaking, it is a bubble scheme, which has been taken up on political grounds, and in antagonism to English interests and English policy.

As regards its political results if completed, Lord Palmerston's language is even more unqualified:—

It requires only a glance at the map of the world to see how great would be the naval and military advantage to France, in a war with England, to have such a short cut to the Indian Seas, while we should be obliged to send ships and troops round the Cape. Thorwenel proposes, indeed, that the passage of ships of war should be forbidden, as at the Dardanelles; but I presume he does not expect us to receive such a proposal, except with a decently suppressed smile. Of course the first week of a war between France and England would see 15,000 or 20,000 Frenchmen in possession of the canal, to keep it open for them and shut

for us. But then, moreover, so strong a military barrier between Syria and Egypt would greatly add to the means of the Pasha for the time being to declare himself independent of Turkey, which would mean his being a dependent of France; and, lastly, if the canal should never be made, the French company are to have a grant of land in the centre of Egypt, a colony whose complaints against the Egyptian Government, well or ill-founded, would give the French Government pretence for interfering in all the internal affairs of the country.

The most singular thing about these gloomy speculations is that they leave absolutely out of account the British Mediterranean fleet, which is apparently to lie quietly at its station while France performs the feat—not exactly an affair of a few days—of transporting an army of 15,000 or 20,000 men to the mouth of the Suez Canal, and there landing them and making them masters of the ports. Even so, however, it might have occurred to Lord Palmerston that the canal would have two ends, and that we ourselves have ships of war and soldiers within no very difficult reach of Suez. But it is unnecessary to dwell further on these temporary aberrations of one of the shrewdest and furthest-sighted Ministers who have ever ruled in England. One thing of course he could not have foreseen in his prediction as to the military use of the canal, and that was, that its artfully strategic employment at a critical moment by a brilliant British commander for the purpose of an expedition, enabled him to reduce in a few weeks' time a military insurrection which he might have been months in dealing with if no canal had existed.

For some time to come, however, it did look as if Lord Palmerston's opinion as to the impracticability of the work was to be confirmed by events. At the death of Said Pasha, in 1863, his successor Ismail, son of Ibrahim Pasha, was so much alarmed at the largeness and uncertainty of the late Viceroy's grants to the Canal company, and so anxious to retire from the obligation of finding forced labour for the construction of the works, that he refused to ratify or agree to his predecessor's concessions. The difficulty was, however, settled by the arbitra-

tion of the Emperor of the French, who awarded a large sum to be paid to the Canal company by the Viceroy, as indemnity for the loss they would sustain by the withdrawal of forced labour and by the retrocession of large grants of land. The money so obtained was applied to the prosecution of the works, which were steadily pursued for another six years. In February 1869 the water began to flow from the Mediterranean, and from the Red Sea in July of the same year. On November 17th, amid a scene of enthusiastic rejoicing and of splendid hospitalities quite to the taste of the reigning Khedive, the great waterway was formally declared open to the commerce of the world.

## CHAPTER II

### THE DAY OF ISMAIL PASHA

THE Khedivate of Ismail Pasha was destined, partly through the virtues, but finally through the vices of that potentate, to form a momentous epoch in the history of modern Egypt. That union of East and West which a contemporary poet pronounces impossible, had in Ismail's case been attempted by Nature with interesting but, in the end, disastrous results. The "great ideas" which he owed to the Occidental element in his character were sound enough. He perceived, that is to say, as clearly as any European ruler could have perceived, that Egypt was a land of vast productive possibilities, needing only the liberal and prudent application of capital for their development. Liberality, a virtue common enough among Eastern princes, he thoroughly understood; but with prudence, a more distinctive quality of the Western administration, he was much less familiar. His industrial enterprises were grandiosely conceived, but improvidently financed. Everything was done to stimulate the cultivation and manufacture of sugar, of cotton, and of other Egyptian staples, the Khedive himself becoming the largest cultivator in his dominions. Great sums of money were sunk in undertakings which could not for many years become remunerative, and in the meantime Ismail was becoming more and more deeply "dipped." Like many other sanguine projectors of the same sort, he failed to understand that arithmetic has no respect for motives, and that if a man's income is not sufficient to pay the interest on his loans, it does not matter whether the borrowed money

has been sunk by a benevolent despot in attempts to promote the prosperity of his country, or squandered by a reckless spendthrift on the gratification of his appetites. Nor, it must be admitted, was this last source of expenditure altogether unrepresented in the Khedive's balance-sheet. If His Highness was interested in sugar and cotton, he had also a pretty taste in French opera-bouffe. He was fond of entertaining distinguished guests, and his hospitalities were magnificent. In short, while engaging in as hazardous ventures as any Western capitalist, he denied himself none of the costly luxuries of an Oriental prince. But it is probable, and it is only fair to remind ourselves, that both these drains upon the Khedivial purse—the drain of his ambitious undertakings, and the drain of his personal outlay upon display and *menus plaisirs*—would not, or not so speedily, have emptied it without the assistance of a third instrument. Ismail Pasha was not only a speculator crossed with a spendthrift, but he was also the pre-destined victim of the latter's most formidable enemy —the loan-monger. In one respect only is the state of an embarrassed Eastern borrower in the Khedive's position more gracious than that of the desperate "plunger" among ourselves: he is not compelled to accept any portion of his advance in the form of doubtful wine or spurious "old masters." *Per contra*, however, he is two or more removes from his real creditor, the investing public, to reach whom he has to pass, so to speak, through a double line of Jews, neither of which forgets to take toll for the passage. Some, perhaps, of the Khedive's loans were honestly and providently raised by those who negotiated them on his behalf; in some cases the high financial name of the chief intermediary went bail for the purity of his share in the transaction. But in other cases the sweating process must have been vigorously active, and the sum which ultimately reached the Egyptian Treasury was probably not much greater than the sixty per cent. fraternity allow their victims in the dealings of private life.

Such a method of finance could have had only a terrible issue. Towards the close of the year [illegible] difficulties, which had been gathering [illegible] previously, threatened positive disaster. He had reached the stage of the debtor who, having mortgaged all his realty up to the hilt, can raise no more ready money, save by sending his heirlooms and art treasures to the hammer. The Khedive possessed at least one highly valuable asset—his proprietary interest in the Suez Canal; and the greater portion of this interest he resolved to dispose of. The dramatic story of its transfer has often been told, and need not be repeated here in any detail. Suffice it to say that through the prompt and patriotic action of my colleague, journalist, the fact, till then unknown to the Foreign Office, that these shares of the Khedive were practically in the market, and even, it was believed, in imminent danger of passing into the hands of France, was conveyed to Lord Beaconsfield; and within another twenty-four hours the British public were startled, agreeably or disagreeably, according to their political opinions, by the news that their Government had acquired these titles for the sum of £4,000,000 sterling. It was undoubtedly a spirited and striking move on the part of the British Cabinet in the game of European competition for influence in Egypt—so spirited, indeed, and so striking, that we can hardly wonder if many of those who approved of it in principle did not express that approval without some little inward trepidation. It must be remembered that the recommendations of the purchase, considered solely from the business point of view, were in those days imperfectly appreciated. The handsome dividends with which their shares were a few years later to enrich the British Treasury can hardly have been foreseen by the Government themselves, or have entered into the calculations of even the most sanguine among them. To the British people at large, they were, of course, still more problematical; and the commercial justification for the investment of so large a sum of public money being thus

ural to assume that the transaction had wn to the world in general, and of too at once disclosed. This uncertainty, not national mind was, of course, the opportunity of the ever-watchful Stock Exchange speculator, who, in taking advantage of it for his own purposes, enhanced its intensity. Within a very short time too the operations of "speculators for the rise" in Egyptian Stocks received a brisk stimulus from what was known as the "Cave Mission." At the request of the Khedive, the Government took the much criticized step of despatching Mr Steph[illegible] the Treasury, to enquire into the [illegible] inter-ested in so interpreting it, as [illegible] on the part of Lord Beaconsfield and [illegible] whole financial affairs of Egypt unde[illegible]s was freely alleged in some exceptionally sanguine quarters, to guarantee the entire Egyptian Debt. What might have happened if they had had the courage for so Napoleonic an enterprise, and whether much of the subsequent bloodshed and confusion might not have been spared, is a question upon which it is useless to speculate. It is pretty certain, however, that if British ministers had been prepared at that date to commit themselves to so heroic a line of policy, they would not have found a like willingness on the part of one whose consent was an essential condition of such a plan. If England had been ready in 1876 to assume the *rôle* of suzerain, Ismail Pasha was certainly unprepared to accept that of feudatory. Nothing indeed was further from his thoughts. He had by this time quite exhausted his Occidentalism, and his Oriental "stop" was on. So far from being disposed to place himself definitely under English tutelage, he was wholly bent upon continuing to govern Egypt on the traditional lines of Khedivial policy—that, namely, of playing upon the secular rivalry of England and France; and his invitation to our Government to assist him in the re-ordering

of his finances was probably based upon nothing more substantial than a vague hope of enabling himself by this means to throw dust in the eyes of the foreign bond-holder.

Any such hope, however, if entertained by him, was speedily shattered. In March, 1876, Mr Cave's report was received in England, and its publication was followed by the immediate collapse of the house of cards which had been built by the stock-gamblers on the supposed meaning and the probable result of his mission. Egypt, it appeared from this extremely damaging document, was financially in a most embarrassed condition, if not upon the actual verge of bankruptcy; and even had the British Government been meditating any attempt to rehabilitate its credit, they must have recoiled from the undertaking. Egyptian stocks fell heavily, and their decline was accelerated by the announcement a few days later that the Khedive had suspended payment of his Treasury Bills.

Meanwhile, and prior to these recitations of the virtual insolvency of Egypt, Ismail Pasha had promulgated a decree establishing a Commission for the regular service of the General Egyptian Debt, both consolidated and floating, and for the amortization of such debt. This body was to be composed of three special Commissioners nominated by the Khedive on the recommendation, respectively, of the English, French, and Italian Governments. By this time, however, Lord Beaconsfield's Government were not a little out of conceit with their Egyptian policy. The immediate effect of their intervention had been apparently only to precipitate a financial crisis in Egypt, which they could only deal with by taking in hand, at any rate to some extent, and with some consequence of responsibility to themselves, the reorganisation of Egyptian finance.

From this step, however, they shrank back in something like affright. It was not that they regarded the task as an unpopular one, nor, perhaps, that they considered it particularly dangerous from the financial point of view. Partly, no doubt, they were influenced by their recognition of the fact

that such a step could never be made perfectly safe except by the assumption of a larger measure of political control over the country, and the imposition of a stricter restraint upon its rulers than they were at that time prepared for; but partly also by the less respectable motive of a terror of Parliamentary attack. The Radicals of that day, who to a man were much too innocent to have ever heard before of gambling on the Stock Exchange for what no Government in the world could be held responsible, were painfully scandalised at the wild speculation in Egyptian securities which the movements of British diplomacy, now advancing, now retreating, not unnaturally produced. They taunted the Government with allowing their policy to be influenced by bond-holders, and the Government were weak enough to be afraid of the taunt. The Khedive's proposal to them to appoint an English commissioner was for the time declined. It was not till they saw that other Powers—not having the fear of an Opposition before their eyes, and unembarrassed by the scruples which were paralyzing the Government of this country—possessing commanding interests, financial and political, in the welfare and tranquillity of Egypt, were likely to exclude them from all share in the re-settlement of Egyptian affairs, that they at last acceded to the Khedive's request, and appointed Major Evelyn Baring, now Lord Cromer, to the post of British representative on the International Commission.

In the meanwhile the despised bond-holders, obstinately incapable of seeing that it was their duty to sacrifice their property and their rights in deference to the delicate susceptibilities of an English political party, were beginning to bestir themselves in defence of their interests. In June, 1876, they solicited the intervention of Mr Goschen in their behalf, and in the course of the autumn Mr Goschen, with whom was associated M. Joubert, as a representative of the French creditors, proceeded to institute a strict and searching inquiry into the state of the Khedive's affairs. Their investigation bore fruit

in November, 1876, in a Report containing recommendations, which Ismail Pasha embodied without delay in a decree. This ordinance started with the appointment of two Comptrollers-General charged with the duty of supervising the incomings and outgoings of Egyptian administration, so as to secure both the regular payment of the State revenues and their due application to the purposes to which they were legally designated. Under this arrangement Mr Romaine and Baron de Malairet were appointed to the offices in question; and as their functions were exclusively auditorial, and they had no control of the Budget or any power, even of recommending economies, it is probable that they might have continued to exercise their functions till the present day without bringing about any improvement in the financial situation.

It was a later article in the Khedivial decree which was fraught with such vast potentialities of reform in Egyptian finance, and eventually with such disastrous consequences for its author himself. Ismail little suspected when he signed the decree which contained this article, that he was raising up a power which would prove too strong for all his resources of audacity and cunning, and drive him step by step into a position of hopeless antagonism to the European Powers, from which there was no retreat but by the path of deposition and exile. For nothing less than these momentous results lay awaiting development in the article of the decree which created the Commission of the Debt a body which was to hold permanent authority until the debt itself should be extinguished. The Commissioners were to have the power of remitting the funds received by them for the public creditor directly to the Bank of England or the Bank of France, while the commodities paid in kind in lieu of taxes were to be directly received and disposed of by them without the intervention of the Finance Minister.

This Commission was appointed in the early days of 1877, Major Baring being the first English representative appointed

to its end for the space of a year they performed, or endeavoured to perform, their tax-collecting and interest-distributing duties without remark. But in January 1878 they felt it to be their duty to propose a Commission of Inquiry into the state of the Egyptian finances, and on the 23rd of the month the Khedive gave to the proposal a qualified and inadequate assent, which, after a couple of months of vigorous diplomatic pressure, he was prevailed upon to enlarge to dimensions satisfactory to the Powers. It was not till April 4th that he finally submitted to a full investigation of the financial position, which was forthwith set on foot under the direction of Mr (now Sir) Rivers Wilson, and in which Major Baring took a most effective part. It was the beginning of the end. The other previous inquiries, instituted by Mr Cave, and by Messrs Goschen and Joubert, had been limited to the ascertainment of the actual revenues of Egypt, in the sense of determining the net income of its Exchequer from all sources of taxation, after deduction of administrative outgoings. This new Commission was for the first time invested with the power of examining into the policy and incidence of the various imposts, and above all, of inquiring whether and to what extent the total revenue of the country was diminished by irregular drains upon its amount. In both these directions the Commissioners went to work with a will, and in little more than four months they were able to issue a first Report of a sufficiently startling nature under both heads of inquiry. The fiscal system of Egypt abounded, they found, with oppressions, abuses, and even ludicrous absurdities. No tax in the country, they went so far as to say, was "regulated by law. The superior authority asks, the inferior authority demands, and the lowest authority takes just what the Treasury has ordered, and there is no appeal." New taxes, sometimes of a quite absurd character, were imposed, they reported, "at discretion." When a bridge was built, the charge was defrayed by taxation, not of the passengers to whom it was a convenience, but of the boatmen to whom it was an

obstruction. All Egyptians who were not landowners had to pay the tax on professions, whether they practised one or not, because they might adopt a profession if they liked: just as Tristram Shandy, it may be remembered, was mulcted in six livres four sous by the French Commissary of the Post, on the ground that although he proposed to continue his journey by water, it was open to him to post if he had chosen, and that His Majesty's revenue could not be allowed to suffer by the traveller's caprice. Egyptians again were forbidden to own scales, lest they should evade the weighing-tax; while the salt-tax, which was nominally levied according to population, was, in fact collected on a system which in England would have resulted in Old Sarum paying a salt-tax on the consumption of five hundred houses. Finally, it had been explained to the Commissioners that all their taxes were levied by "moral pressure," a form of persuasion which they ascertained from other evidence to mean the threat of torture.

The disclosure of these scandals, however, had a less disturbing effect upon the ruler of the State and his family than certain other exhortations of the Commissioners as to the extent to which the personal appropriation of the Khedive and the members of his house had contributed to the embarrassment of the finances. Measured by the amount of their virtually enforced restitutions, this was considerable. The Commission were able to announce their acceptance of an "offer" made by Prince Mohamed Tewfik, on the advice of Nubar Pasha, to surrender all his estates, the annual rental of which amounted to £30,000; and the mother of the Khedive, with other members of his family, had agreed to make similar cessions.

Ismail Pasha's attitude in face of these damaging disclosures was exemplary, so exemplary, in fact, as to excite suspicion. His response to the Report amounted in effect to an announcement of his willingness, not only to surrender all his private estates to the Commission, but to throw in his absolute sovereignty into the bargain. He was ready, he declared, to accept unre-

European system of constitutional government. "My country," he said, in language which combined the grandiosity of Napoleon I. with a touch of the unctuousness of Mr Pecksniff, "is no longer African: we now form part of Europe. It is proper, therefore, to abandon our old ways, and to adopt a new system more in accordance with social progress. . . . Above all, we must not be satisfied with mere words, and for my own part I am resolved to prove my sincerity by my deeds; and to show how thoroughly in earnest I am, I have intrusted Nubar Pasha with the formation of a ministry. And," he added, "I am firmly determined to apply European principles to the Egyptian administration, instead of the personal power hitherto prevailing. I desire a power balanced by the Council of Ministers, and am resolved henceforth to govern with and through this Council, the members of which will be jointly and severally responsible. The Council will discuss all important questions, the majority deciding. Thus, by approving its decisions, I shall sanction the prevalent opinion. Each Minister will apply the decisions of the Council in his own department. Every appointment or dismissal of higher officials will be made by the President of the Council and the Minister of the department, with my sanction. The officials will only obey the chiefs of their own departments."

In pursuance of these admirable resolutions, the Khedive proceeded at once to the appointment of a Ministry "of the European type" under the presidency of Nubar Pasha. Mr Rivers Wilson was appointed Minister of Finance, and M. de Blignières—a former member of the Commission of Inquiry—Minister of Public Works; and Ismail, doubtless, now proposed to devote all his energy and astuteness to the business of "menaging" his constitutional advisers, so that while professing merely to reign and not to govern, he might contrive by hook or by crook to govern as well as reign. What success might have attended this endeavour events did not allow the world to learn; for that fatal Commission had not yet done with him,

and their next move had far-reaching effects. They had "tasted blood," to use a familiar metaphor, and were thirsting for more. They proposed to pursue their investigations further; but at this suggestion even Nubar Pasha took alarm. He was now nominally responsible for the whole administration, and had naturally no taste for further disclosures. Not without plausibility he concluded that, now that the reins of government had been placed in the hands of a constitutional ministry of enlightened European views, the necessity for the extraordinary inquisition had ceased. This view, however, was strenuously resisted by the two European Ministers, who ultimately carried their point; and in January, 1879, a decree was issued, authorizing the Commission to continue its labours, and to formulate a scheme for the definite settlement of the financial difficulties of Egypt. But the Khedive's submission was only assumed; and no sooner had the Commission recommenced its investigations, than he set to work to neutralise their anticipated results by acquiring the control of his constitutional ministry. In this enterprise he had no doubt counted on the co-operation of Nubar Pasha, but he found to his dismay that that astute Armenian had unreservedly thrown in his lot with the two representatives of the European Powers. Ismail had now no choice but to constitute himself a sort of secret chief of the Opposition. He fomented the disaffection of the Turkish and Arab officials and Pashas, whose predominance and privileges were threatened by the new administration; and by a curious concurrence of events, which even the "long arm of coincidence" could hardly have brought about without some assistance from human agency, a mild form of riot broke out at the very moment when the relations between himself and his ministry had reached their most critical stage. A large body of Egyptian officers who had been discharged from the army without a settlement of their long-standing arrears of pay, assembled tumultuously at Cairo, and mobbed and assaulted the Prime Minister and Mr Rivers Wilson. Shortly afterwards, his Highness, yielding gracefully to this unmistakable demonstra-

tion of rational opinion, compelled Nubar Pasha to send in his resignation, and a few weeks later Prince Tewfik was appointed his successor, the Khedive at the same time stipulating for a more active participation in the proceedings of the Cabinet-Council. Specifically he claimed the right of summoning the Council and proposing measures to it; of having all measures submitted to him before being laid before that body, and of personally presiding at all its deliberations.

This was a sufficiently wide departure from that modern constitutional practice to which Ismail had promised to conform; and it was, of course, energetically opposed by the two European Ministers who demanded the reinstatement of Nubar Pasha, and invoked the interference of their Governments in support of their requisition. Neither Power, however, was at the moment, or indeed for some time afterwards, prepared to proceed to extremities with the recalcitrant Khedive, and the dispute was ultimately settled by a compromise. The agents of England and France were instructed to inform Ismail that they would not further press for the re-appointment of the late Prime Minister, in consideration of its being agreed that the Khedive should not, in any case, be present at Cabinet Councils, and that its English and French members should possess an absolute right of veto over any proposed measure. These conditions, which were accompanied by a warning, almost amounting to a menace, of the consequences of refusal, were formally accepted by the Khedive.

It was not in the nature of things that any accommodation thus hastily patched up should be of long endurance. This, as a matter of fact, was fated to be exceptionally short-lived. Its collapse was precipitated by the Second Report of the Commission of Inquiry. Baring and his colleagues had pursued their investigations with a thoroughness which dismayed the old-fashioned officialism of Egypt, and their Report, which was at first only confidentially communicated to the Khedive, brought matters to a crisis. The suppression of the Commis-

sioners' disclosures was past praying for, since the result of their inquiry, whatever line he himself might see fit to take, would, of course, be communicated by them to the Powers. But their recommendations were as distasteful as their visitations, and if he could not close the mouths of the men who were about to expose his maladministration, he could, at any rate, shut his own ears against their advice. His back was to the wall, and he determined on a last desperate stroke for independence. On 7th April he suddenly dismissed his Ministry, and appointed another under the presidency of Riaz Pasha, while, at the same time, he brought forward a counter scheme of his own for the reorganisation of Egyptian finance.

It seemed at first that the Governments of England and France intended to submit tamely to the *coup d'état* of the Khedive. The European Commissioners of the Debt protested against it; nearly every official of high rank in the financial service of the country tendered his resignation, but the Khedive was immovable. *Jacta erat alea!* The last great game had begun, and he must see it out. This so-called "National Project" for the reorganisation of the finances was formally embodied in a decree, and the English Government contented itself for the moment with a strong remonstrance against the action of the Khedive, as showing gross disrespect for the Powers who had nominated the two European members of the Egyptian Ministry, Mr. Wilson and M. de Blignières, and as a flagrant violation of the express engagements into which he had entered by accepting the terms of the compromise arranged such a short time before.

Nor did France appear disposed to take any more energetic measures. Communications were exchanged between the two Powers, and on the 25th of April they joined in a formal demand for the reinstatement of the European Ministers, only to meet after the lapse of ten days with a flat refusal. Another week passed, and the Powers still remained inactive. Both

Governments, no doubt, foresaw that to proceed to extremities with the rebellious Ismail would inevitably lead to an Anglo-French Protectorate of Egypt—an arrangement which they probably regarded as fraught with the elements of future international complications; while on the other hand, neither was prepared to risk the passive hostility, if not the active opposition, of the other by undertaking single-handed the task of re-establishing Western influence. Even now it is a question of much uncertainty what turn events might have taken, had it not been for the unexpected intervention of Germany.

So sudden was the move on her part, and so catastrophic its results, that it struck the imagination of the world at the time; and, indeed, it must still be regarded as one of the most surprising incidents of an obscure situation. Of course, there were abundant diplomatic grounds, in the conventional sense of the term, for this action on the part of the German Government. The circular received by Her Majesty's Ministers on 11th May sets forth these grounds in language of unimpeachable correctness. The German Consul-General had been instructed (it ran), "to declare to the Khedive that the Imperial Government regarded the decree of 22nd April, by which a settlement of the Egyptian Debt was arbitrarily made by the Egyptian Government, acting alone so as to involve the abolition of acquired and recognised rights, as an open and direct violation of the international obligations imposed by the judicial reforms; and that the German Government could not, therefore, admit any binding force in the said decree, in so far as it touched either the competency of the Mixed Courts or the rights of the subjects of the Empire, and that they held the Viceroy responsible for all the consequences of this illegal conduct." Ample justifications for remonstrance, all of them, no doubt. Still one cannot forbear, even now, to ask how it happened that with an unanswered reply (of only a few days old) from the Khedive still under the consideration of the English and French Governments, Germany should have felt called upon

to step so abruptly in. Ismail's "violation [illegible] obligation imposed by the judicial refor[illegible], was, no doubt, "open and direct;" but such breaches of in[illegible] are themselves matters of international concern. As to "the rights of the subjects of the Empire," that indeed was exclusively Germany's affair; but had Germany always been in the habit of indicating these rights with such breathless haste, and by separate action at the first moment of their being threatened? It was, perhaps, too much the fashion in those days to see the hand of Prince Bismarck in everything, but in this case it does not seem unreasonable to suspect that the astute Chancellor may have been actuated by a desire for that joint entanglement of France and England in the administration of the affairs of Egypt which his intervention, he must have foreseen, would inevitably precipitate.

Be that as it may, it is certain that if Prince Bismarck had deliberately planned the creation of an Anglo-French *condominium* in Egypt, he could not have taken any step more exactly calculated to attain his end. On the day when the German Consul-General presented himself at the Khedivial palace in full official costume, and handed in the note summarised in the above-quoted circular, he was practically serving his Highness with "notice to quit." Both France and England were thoroughly alarmed by this sudden apparition of what the present German Emperor was afterwards to describe by the picturesque image of the "mailed fist." They felt that the Khedive had become impossible, and that to permit his continuance on the throne would simply be throwing down Egypt as a bone of contention to be fought for by the Powers. Unwillingly, therefore, but as a step necessary to give formal regularity to their action, they had recourse to his suzerain at Constantinople, and having secured the concurrence of the Sultan in any measures they might find it necessary to adopt, the two Governments directed their representatives to advise the Khedive to abdicate in favour of his son Tewfik. Should he

refuse to take this course, he was to be told that the Powers would again address themselves to the Sultan, in which case he would not be able to count upon obtaining any pension, or on the maintenance of the succession in favour of his son. The German and Austrian Consuls-General made a notification in similar terms a few days later. Ismail hesitated and endeavoured to temporise; asked for time to refer the matter to the Sultan on his own account; and at the last moment declared his willingness to submit his financial scheme to the approval of the Powers, withdrawing the decree against which Germany had originally protested. But it was too late. The voyage of the earthen pot down the troubled stream of intrigue on which it had thus far floated unbroken was at an end, and it was shattered to sherds between its two iron companions. On 26th June, by telegram from Constantinople, the Sultan despatched an Imperial Irade deposing the Khedive in favour of his son Tewfik, and within another twenty-four hours Ismail Pasha had disappeared from the political scene.

# CHAPTER III

## ARABI AND THE REBELLION

If any one were in want of a "short method" with those who point to the present position of England in Egypt as a monumental illustration of the perfidy of perfidious Albion, it would be sufficient for him to refer to the history of the years 1876-1882. So far from its being true that we ever sought to outwit or to steal a march upon our ancient rival in the land of the Pharaohs, we repeatedly, during that period, forebore our own advantage in the competition with him, not so much in any Arthurian spirit of chivalrous magnanimity, as from a mixture of motives in which a sense of fair play counted for something, and political prudence perhaps for more. To Lord Beaconsfield's purchase of the Suez Canal shares, sudden and necessarily secret as was that famous *coup*, no reasonable exception could be taken. Great Britain as the owner of three-fourths of the shipping passing through a canal mainly owned by a French proprietary, yet of vital importance to British commercial and territorial interests, had every right to seize the first opportunity of obtaining proprietorial representation on its administrative Board, not to add of acquiring a right to participate in the profits to which her own flag so largely contributed. Equally natural was it we may admit, that the step should have stimulated our "sweet enemy" to a more energetic assertion of French interests and influence at Cairo. But our Government not only recognised this as reasonable on the part of France, they even went out of their way to welcome it. From 1876 onward, England did everything in her power to show her willingness to act in

nce in the re-settlement of Egyptian affairs; nay [illegible] owed on several occasions that, rather than dispense with that concert, she preferred to maintain an inaction which might imperil her own Egyptian interests, and which, if she had had a free hand, she would certainly have much sooner abandoned.

A crucial and crowning proof of this loyalty to the Anglo-French understanding in Egypt was to be given, as we all know, a year or two later than the stage at which we have now reached; but the evidences of our good faith are quite unmistakable by any candid observer even here.

It was by the joint action of England and France that the late Khedive had been enthroned, and the two Governments proceeded step by step, in complete harmony, to settle the form of government for his successor, whom they found much more amenable than his father. Tewfik Pasha entered upon the succession with a high reputation for integrity and accessibility to Western ideas. His habits were simple, and his *entourage* compared very favourably with Ismail's—with whom, indeed, he had for some time past been on no very cordial terms. The promptitude with which, on the first Report of the Commission of Inquiry, he had set the example of restitution, by surrendering his own share in the appropriated estates, has been already noted, and his first act on succeeding to the Khedivate was to lower his own Civil List from £360,000 to £200,000 a year.

The first care of the two Powers was, of course, to prevent the unspeakable Turk from making capital out of the new Egyptian situation. To have revoked the firman of 1873, which had practically emancipated Egypt from the control of the Sultan, would, of course, have suited the purposes of the Porte to perfection. The Powers, however, had no mind to allow the country to be reduced to its ancient state of vassalage to Constantinople. Under strong pressure from them, the Porte withdrew its pretensions, and a firman was granted

confirming Tewfik Pasha in all the priv
his father. A week or so afterwards it was
Pasha that his resignation was expected, an
it, Riaz Pasha—who was regarded as th
Egyptian statesmen, and who as a member
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greatest odium with the Turkish party—w
formation of a new Cabinet.

For eighteen months a superficial tra
Egyptian affairs. In the course of the yea
ment which settled the financial difficulties of Egypt on a satisfactory basis was finally validated in the shape of a "law of liquidation," and other reforms were set on foot. But early in the year 1881 signs of trouble began to show themselves. Ismail's perilous policy of using and fomenting military disaffection for his own political ends was about to bear evil fruit. On the 1st of February a sputter of mutiny occurred over a quarrel between the Circassian and Arab officers of the Egyptian army, the latter of whom protested against the favouritism displayed, as they alleged, towards the former. The Minister of War, himself a Circassian, sided with his countrymen, and put three of the mutineers' colonels under arrest. The regiment of one of these officers, acting under preconcerted instructions from him, took up arms, marched to the military prison, and having broken it open, released their colonel. Loud demands were then made by them for his reinstatement, and for the dismissal of the Minister of War. Tewfik Pasha took counsel of the English and French Consuls-General; but it was found, not only that the other troops in Cairo were not to be relied on to put down the mutiny, but that a black regiment was actually on its way to join the mutineers. There was nothing for it but to yield. The soldiers, temporarily pacified, retired with shouts of "Long live the Khedive!" to their barracks, and the Minister of War was replaced by one of his colleagues

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began to put themselves into secret com-
ll those who were dissatisfied with the political situation, and the military revolt soon became the nucleus of an agitation which extended itself over a wide political area. The tone of the officers in addressing protests to the Khedive on one or two subjects of complaint which turned up during the next few months, became increasingly disrespectful. Early in September the leaders of the disaffected soldiery conceived, or feigned, the impression that a sort of *coup d'état* was meditated, which was to take the form of their summary arrest; and these fears were confirmed, or rendered more plausible, by the issue of an order by the Minister of War for the transfer of the 4th regiment of infantry—of which a certain Arabi Bey, afterwards to become better known to fame, was colonel—from Cairo to Alexandria. Meetings were held by him and his partisans on September 7th, at which it was resolved to make a demonstration for the purpose of intimidating the Khedive and compelling the resignation of Ministers.

On Friday, September 9th, the storm burst. At one o'clock in the afternoon of that day, the Minister of War was informed by a letter, signed "Arabi Bey," that at three o'clock the army would present itself in the square before the Abdin Palace, to demand the execution of the political programme which the leaders had agreed on, and which consisted of the following three points:—(1) The instant dismissal of Riaz Pasha and all his colleagues; (2) the summoning of the Chamber of

Notables; (3) the carrying out of the recom[illegible] Military Commission, the most important of [illegible]as that the army should be augmented by 18,000 men. The Viceroy, who was at the Palace of Ismailieh when his minister brought him this insolent letter, had only English advisers at call. Mr Colvin, one of the Comptrollers-General, and Mr Cookson, the British Acting-Agent and Consul-General, were summoned, together with the Egyptian ministry, and their counsel to him was to stand firm. He was advised to go at once in person to the Abdin barracks, and putting himself at the head of the 1st regiment of the guard, to proceed with the same purpose to the Citadel, where was another regiment on whose loyalty it was supposed that he could rely. He would thus anticipate the arrival of Arabi, who had to come some distance from the barracks at Abbassieh with his mutinous forces, at the Abdin Square. This programme was carried out as to its first steps with perfect success. Both the regiments received him with loyal acclamations, and had the Khedive returned with the 2nd regiment from the Citadel to the Abdin Palace at once, the course of Egyptian events might have been different. There might have been no Tel-el-Kebir, and possibly no Lord Wolseley—or at least no Lord Wolseley of Cairo.

But it was not to be. The Khedive was not a man equal to these heroic measures. He insisted on driving to Abbassieh, with apparently some weak idea of stopping Arabi's advance by negotiations. But when he got there he found the barracks empty, Arabi having marched the troops off half an hour before, together with eighteen pieces of artillery; and when he got back to Abdin, he found the Square lined by 4000 troops, with cavalry in the centre, and the eighteen pieces of artillery brought to bear on his windows. The two regiments which had sworn fidelity an hour before, acting, no doubt, on the sound principle that *les absents ont toujours tort*, had joined Arabi's forces. Tewfik entered his palace by the back door, and still acting under the spirited advice of Mr Colvin, who

throughout, he descended the great staircase of colonels, of which Arabi and one Abdullah , and commanded them to dismount. The ; and perhaps if the Khedive had then and he necessary promptitude, ordered them to swords, that order, too, might have received he mutiny have been quelled. But the manded them to sheathe their swords—a very as regards its moral effect—and when, in abi repeated the three points of the army's demands, their sovereign, already beaten, could only withdraw to the palace, under the pretext of considering his rebellious subject's terms. Having failed, however, to quell him by moral force, and there being absolutely no material force at his command, the unfortunate Tewfik had nothing for it but to "back down," and all that Mr Cookson, who acted as intermediary between him and the mutineers, could do, was to disguise the surrender as decently as might be in negotiatory form. But the surrender itself was complete. Riaz Pasha, politically speaking, executed the happy despatch; and when Mr Cookson, on announcing this to the mutineers, stipulated that the Khedive should have full liberty to choose his new Ministry, the mutineers insisted on saving him the trouble. They nominated Sherif Pasha, and to this also their master had to consent; whereupon they retired to barracks to the old tune of "Long live the Khedive!"

The crisis was not yet over, for Sherif Pasha at first refused the nomination. For several days Egypt was without a Ministry, and it looked as if a military *pronunciamento* might occur at any hour. The Cabinets of England and France made no move or sign of any intention to move. Tewfik telegraphed to the Porte for 10,000 soldiers to put down the military revolt, but there was nothing that the Porte wanted less than to see the revolt put down, and Arabi openly boasted, no doubt with perfect truth, that he had support from Constantinople. Sherif

Pasha stood out for the removal of the mutinous regiments from Cairo, on the condition of his accepting office. The military party refused to submit to these terms, and continued to demand the right of nominating the Minister of War, an increase of the army to 18,000 men, and a constitution. They, however, made a mistake in summoning the notables, sheiks of the villages, and others, to demonstrate in favour of their constitutional claims; for the notables were much less anxious for an enlargement of their liberties than for a pacification of the military revolt. This somewhat discouraged the mutineers, and finally the matter was settled by a compromise. The officers agreed to quit Cairo for a time, to withdraw their demand for the augmentation of the army, and to leave Sherif free to choose his own Cabinet and determine the time when constitutional liberties should be granted; while the latter, on his part, agreed to nominate a War Minister of their choice, and to carry out the other recommendations of the Military Commission.

The condition was carried out loyally enough on both sides. The Khedive signed four decrees embodying the recommendations aforesaid, and another decree for the opening of the Chamber of Delegates. Arabi and Abdullah performed their promise of withdrawing their regiments from Cairo, one to Ouady and the other to Damietta. But Tewfik's authority, it was plain to everybody, had been fatally shaken. All the discontented elements of the country were now active and stirring, and in particular the influential ring of corrupt native functionaries—who saw themselves in danger of being permanently supplanted, and their opportunities of plunder taken from them for ever by Western officials—believed that now, at last, there would be an opportunity of shaking off the control of the foreigner.

The year 1882 opened dark with omens of future disturbance. Arabi returned suddenly from Ouady in the first week of January, and, to the surprise and consternation of all

ired a renewal of the troubles, was appointed
n the Ministry of the very statesman whose
leavoured to subvert. No one imagined this
rabi had drawn nearer to Sherif Pasha, and
just inference was that Sherif had drawn
Concurrently with his accession to office,
sed to have been drafted or inspired by him,
*Times*, demanding, among other things, the
European control and a general dismissal of
officials, and raising the cry of "Egypt for the Egyptians."

The two partners to the *condominium* acted—on paper at any rate—with promptitude and vigour. An Identic Note was addressed to the Khedive by the British and French Governments, declaring their determination to "ward off by their united efforts all causes of external or internal complications which might menace the *régime* established in Egypt." To this the Chamber of Notables replied on the 18th January by the defiant step of claiming a right to regulate the national budget. Against this pretension the Controllers protested, and in the deadlock which ensued Sherif Pasha resigned. The Khedive, whose authority was naturally falling all the time into even deeper contempt, declined to nominate a successor to Sherif, and left this selection to the Chamber, who appointed a figure-head President of the Council in Mahmud Samy, at the same time promoting the real ruler of the country, Arabi, from Under-Secretary to Minister of War. The pretensions of the Chamber of Notables were not likely to be abated by the change of ministry, and they continued to discuss measures which transferred to the Ministry and Parliament the right of settling the budget, a right which had been hitherto totally vested in the Controllers. These officers protested to their respective governments, but without any immediate effect. The truth was that these events were beginning to illustrate more and more pointedly and painfully the essential weakness of the

Dual Control, a weakness aggravated by the chronic instability of one of the two governments parties to it. Early in the year M. Gambetta was ready to take summary measures with Arabi and his faction, and pressed for Lord Granville's co-operation; but before anything could be decided, M. Gambetta's ministry fell, and was succeeded by that of M. Freycinet, a statesman as much wedded to the policy of inaction as his predecessor to the views of the forward school.

Thus the weeks slipped on, with Arabi and his partisans rapidly concentrating all that remained of authority in their own hands. The Khedive's sovereignty and presence were audaciously ignored by the revolutionary party, and on one occasion the President of the Council had the presumption to summon the Chamber without consulting the Khedive, and to notify that, until its assembling, no further communication would be held with the nominal ruler of the country. And more ominous still, in view of the fact that the French and English Governments, now fairly alarmed, had despatched a couple of ironclads to Alexandria, the President of the Council went on to state, that though they were prepared to answer for the safety of Europeans, their guarantee would only hold good in the event of an intervention by the Porte alone. This, however, was, no doubt, a mere vague menace at the time of its utterance; and when the so-called National party heard, as they soon did hear, that, not a couple of ironclads merely, but an Anglo-French fleet was on its way to Alexandria, preceded by a joint declaration of the two Governments that they reserved to themselves the right to employ such other means as they might deem necessary to make order respected, and maintain the authority of the Khedive, the first effect of the news was to cause them considerable alarm. On the evening of the day when the sailing of the combined fleets from Suda was telegraphed, the Khedive's Ministers presented themselves to him at the Ismailieh Palace, and made a complete submission. This attitude, however,

was not long maintained. No sooner, indeed, did the French and English Consuls-General attempt to push their advantage a little further, than they found that the old resistance was still vigorous. An endeavour was made to procure Arabi's withdrawal from Egypt for a year, but he flatly declined to go, and the Ministry resigned. The Khedive endeavoured, but in vain, to induce Sherif Pasha to undertake the work of government again, and in the meantime the arrogance of the military party was growing apace. The Khedive was informed that the army rejected the joint Note of the Powers, and would recognise no authority but that of the Porte. On the 27th May Arabi engineered a demonstration, the object of which was to warn Tewfik that, unless he reinstated him as Minister of War, his own life would be in danger.

Events now began to march with increased rapidity to their predestined issue. Arabi, whether nominally War Minister or not, was now virtually the only power in the country. The soldiers took their orders from him, and the first orders which he gave after the arrival of the allied fleets at Alexandria, were to put the harbour in a state of defence. Earthworks were hastily thrown up and batteries erected, and the spectacle of the Egyptian soldiery levelling their own artillery at the levelled guns of the British and French ironclads had, of course, a terribly disturbing effect upon the minds of the native community. The feeling against the Europeans in Alexandria grew stronger every day, and Mr Cookson, then Judge and Consul at that port, forwarded on to Lord Granville, on the 30th of May, a note of warning, signed by the principal merchants, as to the dangerous condition of the city. Arabi, in the teeth of repeated remonstrances, continued to push on his defences, and in spite of their professions of allegiance to the Porte, the arrival from Constantinople of the Turkish Commissioner, Dervish Pasha—whom Tewfik, with the grudging sanction of the Anglo-French control, had sent for—produced no change in the situation. The commander of the revolted

soldiery now felt himself strong enough to defy everybody. He treated with contempt the orders alike of the Khedive, the Sultan (though with this potentate he possibly had an understanding), the European Consuls, and the British Admiral. Of these authorities, the last alone had any means of compelling obedience, and Sir Beauchamp Seymour was not at the moment in a position to employ them.

On June 11th a serious riot broke out at Alexandria, under the very guns of the allied fleets. In the disturbance, Mr Cookson was dragged out of his carriage and maltreated by the rioters, the Greek Consul-General was attacked, and a French consular dragoman, with several French and British subjects, were killed. The total loss of life was variously estimated at from 50 to 200. On the news reaching Cairo, the representatives of the European Powers, recognising the impotence of the Khedive to protect them, appealed to Dervish Pasha, as the representative of the Sultan, to insure the security of Europeans throughout Egypt. Dervish replied that neither he nor the Khedive possessed any such power, and that being without troops he must decline the responsibility. In these circumstances it was deemed necessary to take the humiliating step of applying to the cause of the danger itself. Arabi at once undertook to make the Khedive's orders respected, and Dervish Pasha associated himself with him. From the point of view of the two Western Powers, it was a sinister conjunction, and one which threatened to exact the displacement of European, and the restoration of Turkish authority in Egypt as the price of keeping order in the country. And such, beyond all doubt, would have been the result, had it not been for the firmness of the British Admiral.

Acting under general instructions from home, which allowed him considerable discretion, Sir Beauchamp Seymour had made repeated remonstrances against the continual fortifying of Alexandria; and after meeting with a series of warm replies, he at last, on the 7th July, threatened the military party

with coercive measures if they still maintained their defiant attitude. Three days later he despatched a formal ultimatum to Arabi, demanding not only the stoppage of the work on the forts, but their immediate surrender into British hands. By this time the European inhabitants had almost wholly embarked on board the ships provided for their reception, and no submission having been received from Arabi, the British ships at nightfall on the 10th withdrew from the inner harbour to take up the positions assigned to them at the proper bombarding distance from the forts. It was a critical moment in the history of the Anglo-French *condominium*. France had, through her naval representative in the waters of Alexandria, to decide then and there whether she would pursue the policy of co-operation with England in Egyptian affairs to its logical conclusion, or whether she would withdraw from it, recoiling from its dangers, its political inconveniences and complications, and leave the ultimate advantages, such as they might be, to be gathered and appropriated by her ally. She chose the latter course, and on the withdrawal of the allied fleets from Alexandria harbour the French ironclads steamed away to Port Said.

The English vessels remained, and cleared for action. They were thirteen in number, including some of the most powerful ships in the British Navy. At 7 A.M. on 11th July the first shot was fired by the *Alexandra;* it was at once replied to by the forts, and the action became general. The practice of the Egyptian gunners was better than was expected, but their projectiles were ineffective against the armoured sides of the British ships. The British gunners worked their artillery with remarkable vigour and precision, and there could, of course, be but one end to the unequal duel. One of the forts was blown up at 8.30, and half an hour later those in its immediate neighbourhood had only four guns left in position. At 11 A.M. these were silenced, and when an hour later a spiking party landed, they found the batteries wholly

deserted. Fort Pharos, occupying the strongest position at the eastern extremity of the line of defence, held out till 4 P.M., and it was not till an hour and a half later that the order was given from the flagship to cease firing. Our loss was only five killed and twenty-seven wounded.

The forts, however, not having been formally surrendered after the silencing of their guns, the bombardment was renewed the next morning, when a flag of truce was hoisted from the shore, and an officer was sent to state the terms of the British Admiral, a preliminary to which was a demand for the immediate surrender of the forts. With this the military commandant declared that he was unable to comply without the consent of the Khedive. A truce of some hours was then agreed upon, but at the expiration of the time, no answer having been received, the *Inflexible* re-opened fire. Another flag of truce was then hoisted, and our envoy, on landing once more in response to it, found that the entire line of fortification had been abandoned by Arabi and his troops under cover of the white flag which had been displayed since the early morning. And now a deplorable result of the conflict occurred. Either through the deliberate throwing open of the prison doors by the Egyptian soldiery, or from some other cause, the criminals immured in the prisons of Alexandria obtained their liberty, and scenes of pillage and devastation took place which lasted almost without interruption for the two following days, July 12th and 13th, during which it was estimated, though probably with considerable exaggeration, that more than 2000 Europeans, chiefly Greeks and Levantines, lost their lives. The destruction of property was undoubtedly very great, as the indemnity afterwards payable in respect of it sufficiently proves. On the 14th, Admiral Beauchamp Seymour, who, doubtless on political grounds, had hesitated hitherto to order a military occupation of the fort, found it impossible to hold his hand longer, and landed a force of blue-jackets and marines to undertake the work of policing the town. This, as we all know, is a work which

the Englishman thoroughly understands, and most promptly and effectually was it performed. Plunderers caught in the act were summarily shot, and all others under reasonable suspicion of being concerned in acts of violence and pillage were carried off to prison to await trial in the regular way. In the course of twenty-four hours order was restored. The Khedive, who had been a virtual prisoner in his palace at Ramleh, a few miles from Alexandria, and whose life had, no doubt, been for a time in danger, was now released from *duresse*, and placing himself formally under English protection, he was conveyed back to the Ras-et-Tin, where he was guarded by 700 marines. The principal seaport of Egypt was now in military occupation, but Cairo was still in the hands of the insurgent military chiefs, and Arabi, having hurriedly withdrawn all his troops from Alexandria, was preparing to take up his first defensive position in the desert.

## CHAPTER IV

### TEL-EL-KEBIR AND THE FALL OF ARABI

It had now become clear enough to the British Government that unless their whole Egyptian policy, and, indeed, that of Europe, was to be laid in ruins, it would be necessary for them to undertake vigorous measures for the suppression of the military rebellion, and the restoration of the authority of the Khedive. A vote of credit was obtained from Parliament on the 27th July, and three days later the first battalion of the Scots Guards sailed for Egypt. Other troops rapidly followed. The force originally despatched from this side of the Canal numbered about 1010 officers and 21,000 non-commissioned officers and men. This was afterwards increased, reinforcements bringing up the number to over 33,000, and a little later it was still further strengthened by a contingent of Indian troops, completing a grand total of 40,560 of all ranks as the full strength of the expeditionary army.

Sir Archibald Alison was the first General officer to reach the seat of operations, and to throw out reconnaissances to discover the whereabouts and strength of the insurgent Egyptian troops, when it was found that Arabi was entrenching himself at Kafr ed-Dauar. Skirmishing and outpost engagements kept the enemy well employed, and compelled them to remain in their positions instead of scattering themselves over the country; but the British general, unlike too many others in the same position, had the loyalty and self-control to refrain from any premature attempt to snatch laurels for himself by attacking in force before the arrival of his chief. On 10th

August Sir John Adye, chief of the Staff, landed at Alexandria, and was followed within a couple of days by the brigade of Guards. Sir Garnet Wolseley, who had the command-in-chief of the expedition, but who had been delayed by an attack of fever which necessitated his travelling by sea to promote convalescence, arrived at Alexandria on the 16th August, and his first act was to order the re-embarkation of the troops which had already arrived. Then followed the famous naval-and-military ruse which should alone suffice to establish Wolseley's fame, against many carping critics and detractors, as a strategist of exceptional astuteness and inventive genius. Alexandria was full of spies, who were quick to report every movement of the British troops, and their commander therefore openly proclaimed his intention of making for the Bay of Aboukir, silencing the forts there, and then landing the troops. Accordingly, on the afternoon of the 18th, the ironclads and transports steamed out of Alexandria, apparently *en route* for Aboukir, the war-ships clearing for action as though the feigned programme announced was to be actually followed. No one but the few in the commander-in-chief's confidence, not a native, friend or foe, nor even a single English newspaper or newspaper correspondent, had the slightest inkling of what was about to happen; and it was with a shock of mingled surprise and admiration that the public learnt that by the dawn of the next day Port Said had been occupied by the 1st Division, and that the British fleet were in command of the Suez Canal.

The gains of this brilliant manœuvre were not military alone: they were of the highest political and diplomatic value. Sir Garnet Wolseley had not only seized upon the most commanding base of operations against Arabi, but he had stolen a march upon those international jealousies which otherwise would have interposed the most formidable obstacles to our securing the position which he desired to obtain. Had the authorities of the Canal had time to make an effective protest against our use of the waterway for a military purpose, and to appeal to

the Powers against the proceeding, it is certain, even if grave diplomatic complications had not arisen, most dangerous delays would have occurred. As it was, we obtained physical control of the Canal with ridiculous ease, the British Empire being represented on the occasion by a midshipman, who was sent ashore at Port Said to take formal possession of the offices of the Suez Canal Company, on behalf of the British fleet and army. It was made a cause of complaint by the Canal authorities—so at least it was understood at the time—that the mission was not intrusted to an officer of higher rank, not to say stature; but perhaps the selection of the midshipman was intended to symbolize moral as distinct from material force.

So much for the political benefits accruing from this happy expedient; its military advantages were promptly realized. Kantara and Ismailia were seized without delay, and a Highland brigade which had just reached Suez from India, moved rapidly northwards, occupied Shaluf, and saved the Fresh-water Canal. On the 22nd the disembarkation of the 1st Division at Ismailia was completed; other troops, including the Indian contingent, were rapidly joining them; and on the 24th a small English force, consisting of the Household Cavalry, a battalion of Infantry and a detachment of Marines and two 13-pounders of the Horse Artillery, moved out from camp and discovered a strong body of the enemy posted in the neighbourhood of Tel-el-Mahuta, some 10 miles from Ismailia, and to the south of the Ismailia-Cairo railway. They apparently numbered about 10,000, and had twelve Krupp guns in position; but the two English pieces, served as they were by English gunners, were more than a match for them. Our cavalry held the Arabists at bay, and swept them back whenever they showed signs of approaching to the attack of our infantry, and by the end of the day the enemy had had more than enough. They abandoned their entrenchments, and retreated during the night with such marked signs of demoralisation that Wolseley re-

solved to send forward a force at once to occupy Kassassin lock, and thus to secure a supply of fresh water. The force employed for this service, consisting of 1900 men of all arms, set out on the 26th August, and on the 28th encountered a body of Egyptian troops, who themselves commenced the attack, and sustained it with more courage and tenacity than they had yet displayed. The position of our force, the two wings of which were separated by the Freshwater Canal, was at times a critical one, but the fortune of the fight was ultimately determined by a charge of the heavy cavalry, which had been held in reserve through the greater part of the day, and which swept down upon the Egyptian batteries at about sunset with irresistible force. The Egyptians broke and fled, and for two or three hours were pursued through the darkness by our troops.

Both sides now rested for a while on their arms. Arabi, who had taken up his position at Tel-el-Kebir, a spot about thirty miles from Ismailia by rail, and a little more than that distance across the desert from Cairo, was engaged in fortifying it, while Wolseley was awaiting reinforcements from both England and India. On the 9th September the Egyptians advanced a few miles from their fortifications, and an artillery duel ensued, from which they retired, having had considerably the worst of it, and leaving behind them four or five guns; and on the same day Sir Garnet Wolseley, having received what he deemed a sufficient amount of reinforcements, transferred his headquarters from Ismailia to the front, and concentrated his troops within striking distance of Arabi's position. Of the decisive battle that was to follow within a few days, it has been of late years the fashion in some quarters to speak slightingly; and that the resistance offered by Arabi's army to the attack of our troops was not heroic or even fairly obstinate, is no doubt true. But those who dwell too much on this point would do well to remember that troops of quite as inferior quality as the Egyptian have often before made a good fight of it; and that the reason of our having in this

ance driven them so speedily from the earthworks may due far less to the weakness of the enemy than to the l of our dispositions.

And no doubt this was actually the case. Poor as may e been the military quality of Arabi's men, their leader l done everything in his power to make up for their defect moral by the skill with which he had multiplied and magni- the material aids to resistance. His position, it was generally admitted by expert observers, was admirably chosen, and had been skilfully strengthened. It was four miles in length, and consisted of a double line of earthworks, interrupted at intervals by redoubts mounted with guns, so placed as to deliver both front and flank-fire; and behind these works lay an Egyptian army of a magnitude not precisely ascertained but certainly numbering over 20,000 men, while the British force opposed to them did not exceed 13,000. Had we attacked a position like this in the open desert in broad daylight, with no sort of cover for the attacking troops, we should, no doubt, have carried it, but at a cost of life which could not have been otherwise than very large, and which in itself would have encouraged the enemy to prolonged resistance. When, then, we consider that all this was avoided only by Wolseley's bold recourse to a night attack—one of the most difficult and critical of military operations, but planned and carried out in this instance with singular skill and complete success—we may surely see good reasons for regarding the battle of Tel-el-Kebir, in spite of the feeble fighting of our foe, and the speedy rout in which it ended, as quite worthy to take its place among the brilliant achievements of the British arms.

It was at nightfall on the 12th September that the order was given to advance. The camp was broken up, and the whole force moved silently forward. After a short march the men bivouacked noiselessly on the sand, without light or fire, until 1.30 A.M., when the advance was resumed. The Highland brigade under Sir Archibald Alison on the left, and the

infantry brigade under General Graham on the right, cr[illegible] forward through the darkness, and got within 500 yards of [illegible] entrenchments before they were perceived by the enemy. [illegible] shot was then heard from the Egyptian lines, and was follow[illegible] by a fusillade along the whole front of the position. T[illegible] order was instantly given to charge the entrenchments, a[illegible] with a cheer the men of General Graham's brigade rush[illegible] forward, and carried the first line of defence at the point [illegible] the bayonet. The second and stronger line of fortifications gave them no more pause. Officers called upon their men for another effort, and men responded with the utmost spirit. The redoubts were scaled, the gunners bayoneted at their guns, and in twenty minutes from the first rush the whole right of the position which Arabi had been fortifying for weeks was in our hands. Equal success attended our attack upon his left; it is, indeed, a moot point whether the victory in this quarter was not even more speedily gained. The Highlanders cleared the first line of its defenders in a couple of minutes. They advanced more slowly against the inner and stronger one, using rifle-fire as they went; but their last rush was feebly and faint-heartedly resisted. The Egyptian army was now broken up, and in danger of being enclosed between the two wings of the attacking force as in a net; and as it hurriedly extricated itself from this position, its rout was completed by the cavalry which swept round from the north and scattered the flying Arabists far and wide across the desert. The slaughter, however, was not great, for it had been recognised from the first that the rank and file of the force to which we were opposed were scarcely like the soldiery of a European Power, whom it is necessary, or at any rate advisable, to "cut up" with cavalry in their flight, not only in order to "thin down" the enemy with an eye to future conflicts with him, but in order to make victory as complete and disheartening, and defeat as difficult to rally from and repair, as possible. It was calculated, and rightly, that to drive these Egyptian conscripts headlong from

their entrenchments at the point of the bayonet, and to resolve their temporarily coherent mass into so many panic-stricken atoms, would in all probability suffice as a lesson. It was not to be supposed that, in the case of a war which had been precipitated by the ambition of a few officers and the discontent of the rest, the private soldier would have much stomach for the fight. At any rate—although to the dissatisfaction of some of the expeditionary army, who feared that without providing a decent number of killed and wounded on the enemy's side to decorate the despatches, their victory would not be appreciated at its full importance—the order was given to the troopers not to make the chase of the fugitives a too sanguinary business. Eye-witnesses of the pursuit have described the somewhat ludicrous spectacle of the British trooper overtaking the flying Egyptian, not to cut him down or even to ride him down, but to speed him on his way with a contemptuous slap with the flat of the sword, applied to his back or below it. This comically humane treatment was certainly effectual on this occasion; though the fact that these troops never rallied again was possibly due to other causes occurring elsewhere. For at this point again were the foresight, resource, and happy audacity of Sir Garnet Wolseley to be illustrated. It is not every General who would have thought of despatching a mere detachment of cavalry, not more than 300 strong, to "summon" a walled city still containing a military garrison numbering about 10,000 men; but this was what the British commander did. The Indian contingent pressing forward rapidly over the battlefield made for Zagazig, which they occupied. But another force of cavalry and mounted infantry, striking south-west by a desert road, and halting for a few hours at Belbeis, started again before daybreak, and, after a forced march of thirty-nine miles, reached Cairo on the evening of the 14th, little more than thirty-six hours after the blow struck at Tel-el-Kebir. The very hardihood of the enterprise and the swiftness with which it had followed their defeat contributed to overawe the

remnant of the Egyptian soldiery. They admitted the invad[illegible] without the slightest show of resistance, and Arabi, who [illegible] hurried from Tel-el-Kebir by railway on the night of the def[illegible] and taken refuge in his house at Cairo, surrendered witho[illegible] struggle. The little band of horsemen assumed formal milit[illegible] occupation at Cairo on behalf of their commander and the [illegible] of the army; the populace stood sullenly acquiescent, an[illegible] repetition of the scenes of violence at Alexandria was effectu[illegible] averted.

With the fall of Cairo and the capture of Arabi, the "National" movement speedily collapsed. Zagazig, together with the other strongholds of the mutinous soldiery, hastened to surrender, and it was not long before Sir Garnet Wolseley was in a position to direct the re-embarkation of the bulk of the British troops, retaining only a force of from 10,000 to 12,000 men. Thus ended a military expedition which for skilful, strategical ingenuity and swiftness of despatch will be long remembered, despite the detractions of professional jealousy, as one of the most brilliant achievements of the British arms. Its commander returned home before the end of the year to receive his well-merited reward in the thanks of the House of Commons, a grant of £30,000, and elevation to the peerage under the title of Lord Wolseley of Cairo.

There now remained the delicate task of resettling the pacified country. There were, of course, not wanting advisers in this country to select the least eligible, and, indeed, the least practicable, of all the various courses open to the Government, and to press it upon them with all the natural earnestness of ignorance and unwisdom. Some of these counsellors were even guilty of the absurdity of recommending the re-establishment of the Dual Control; but the majority contented themselves with the less manifestly preposterous, but equally inept advice to withdraw as speedily from the country, and to leave Egypt to "stew in her own juice." This, indeed, was substantially the counsel of no less a person than the new

Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mr Courtney, who contended that, after having restored order in Egypt, secured the Canal, and liberated the country from the control of the Sultan, we should retire with a warning to the Khedive that his future position depended upon his management of his own affairs, and the problem of Egypt should be worked out by its own people over the area of Egypt itself. The hopeful idea of warning the unfortunate Khedive, rescued but a few weeks before from his rebellious soldiers, that his future position depended upon his managing his own affairs—which was much as if a dismounted hunting-man, dragged up out of a ditch, with his horse a couple of fields away, were to be told that his place at "the kill" depended upon his own exertions—was possibly Mr Courtney's own; but that a member, even though a subordinate member, of the Government should have ventilated it at such a moment, went far to suggest either that it was not opposed to the views of the Cabinets, or else that they had formed no views on the subject at all. The latter hypothesis is, perhaps, the more probable of the two. It is quite likely that Mr Gladstone and his colleagues really did not know that the Khedive's authority had not been restored to the throne together with his person, and that the capacity and the instruments which would be required, if the "problem of Egypt was to be worked out by its own people," simply did not exist.

On the former of these points they were speedily enlightened by the Khedive himself. Tewfik Pasha made no secret of the fact that he felt himself to be powerless, and that it would be impossible for him to maintain his authority over his people if the hand of Great Britain were withdrawn. As to the plan of allowing Egypt to work out her own salvation, that, too, the Government found not to be one at all capable of being put immediately to the test. On the whole they resolved, as only the shortest-sighted among them could ever have doubt that they would have to resolve, to retain administrative as

well as military hold upon Egypt for the present, and to institute a careful inquiry as to how and when it would be possible to substitute native administration for our own.

No more skilled investigator of such a question as this could be found, they thought, than Lord Dufferin, and the accomplished diplomatist was accordingly despatched to Egypt to examine into the conditions of the country and to lay down the basis upon which self-government might be established in the valley of the Nile. He arrived at Cairo in the first week of November, 1882, and the first incident which followed his coming was the despatch of a Note from the Egyptian Government to the Governments of London and Paris, requesting that the *condominium* should cease. Upon the communication of the Note to the French Cabinet on November 12th, M. Duclerc intimated to Lord Lyons that France would regard this measure as inspired by the English Government, and urged that the joint control having been established by the French and English Governments, its suppression by the Government of the Khedive could not take effect without the consent of both the other contracting parties.

Some diplomatic fencing then followed, but it was doubtless secretly felt by the French no less than by the English Government that, apart from the vehement opposition of the Khedive, the re-establishment of a system which one of its two founders had left the other to defend at his own sole cost in blood and treasure was impossible. The *condominium* had melted away for ever in the smoke of the British guns at Alexandria in July, and both France and England knew it. The negotiations, in fact, were almost avowedly directed to the sole end of saving the susceptibilities of the former Power. Thus, at a somewhat later date, a Note was despatched by the English Government, offering to France the Presidency of the Public Debt Commission as a compensation for the abolition of the Anglo-French Control. This, however, was declined, as being an inadequate recognition of "the legitimate interests of France,"

and in the final reply to it, which was sent early in December, the French Government set forth the political character of the interests which France sought to preserve in Egypt alongside, or apart from, the financial interests possessed by her citizens, and left it to England to devise a scheme capable of reconciling the claims of the two Powers, and expressing a hope that such reconciliation might eventually be brought about. Relieved, accordingly, of all fear of international complication, Lord Dufferin was able to proceed unhindered with his work of inquiry; and early in the following year he drafted and presented to the Government his plan for the reorganization of the administrative system of Egypt and the resettlement of its finances. The consideration of this scheme may be more conveniently deferred to a later period of this work. For some months before its promulgation, at a date indeed coincident with Lord Dufferin's arrival in the country, there appeared on the southern horizon of Egypt a "shadow like a man's hand"— the forewarning of a storm which was to burst over the whole region of the Upper Nile. At the beginning of November the news reached Cairo that a False Prophet had arisen in the Sudan, and that, having collected a formidable force, he was preparing to march on Khartum.

It was impossible that the apparently arbitrary, though in reality absolutely necessary action of Great Britain in occupying the Suez Canal, to protect it from the Arabists, should not lead to a European discussion of the international status of that waterway. We, at least, could enter upon such an exchange of views with a clear conscience; for though it is true that in laying forcible hands on the Canal we were consulting the strategical needs of our conflict with the rebel soldiery of the Khedive, it is none the less true that we were at the same time protecting the menaced interests of the whole world of civilized commerce. In what imminent danger they had been placed the following brief interchange of communications between

M. de Lesseps and Arabi suffices to show. On the former being told that the British Admiral was instructed to occupy the Canal, in order to protect it against the Arabists, he telegraphed to Arabi—"*Jamais les Anglais n'y pénétreront, jamais, jamais!*" and further urged him to "make no attempt to intercept *my* Canal. *I* am there. Not a single English soldier shall disembark without being accompanied by a French soldier." To which Arabi replied: "Sincere thanks. Assurances consolatory, but not sufficient under existing circumstances. The defence of Egypt requires the temporary destruction of the Canal."

This temporary destruction having been averted by the action of the British Government in August, 1882, Lord Granville, in January of the following year, deemed it advisable to address a Circular Despatch on the subject to the British ambassadors at the Courts of the Great Powers. In the course of this he wrote:—

> One result of recent occurrences has been to call special attention to the Suez Canal; firstly, on account of the danger with which it was threatened during the first brief success of the insurrection; secondly, in consequence of its occupation by the British forces in the name of the Khedive, and their use of it as a base of the operations carried on in His Highness's behalf, and in support of his authority; and thirdly, because of the attitude assumed by the Directors and Officers of the Canal Company at a critical period of the campaign.
>
> As regards the first two of these points, Her Majesty's Government believe that the free and unimpeded navigation of the Canal at all times, and its freedom of destruction or damage by acts of war, are matters of importance to all nations. It has been generally admitted that the measure taken by them for protecting the navigation and the use of the Canal on behalf of its territorial Ruler, for the purpose of restoring her authority, was in no way an infringement of the general principle.

In order, however, to put the position of the Canal upon a clearer footing for the future and to provide against possible dangers, Lord Granville proceeded to set out the heads of an agreement which he thought might, with advantage, be concluded between the Great Powers. They are well worth studying for the purpose of comparison with the actual international

convention which has been agreed to on the subject. They are as follows:—

(1) That the Canal should be free for the passage of all ships in any circumstances.
(2) That in time of war a limitation of time as to ships of war of a belligerent remaining in the Canal should be fixed, and no troops or munition of war should be disembarked in the Canal.
(3) That no hostilities should take place in the Canal or its approaches, or elsewhere in the territorial waters of Egypt, even in the event of Turkey being one of the belligerents.
(4) That neither of the two immediately foregoing conditions shall apply to measures which may be necessary for the defence of Egypt.
(5) That any Power whose vessels of war happen to do any damage to the Canal, should be bound to bear the cost of its immediate repair.
(6) That Egypt should take all measures within its power to enforce the conditions imposed on the transit of belligerent vessels through the Canal in time of war.
(7) That no fortification should be erected on the Canal or in its vicinity.
(8) That nothing in the Agreement shall be deemed to abridge or affect the territorial rights of the Government of Egypt further than is therein expressly provided.

The despatch did not lead to very prompt action on the part of the Powers, for more than two years elapsed before any steps were taken in the direction indicated by Lord Granville. But in January 1885 M. Waddington addressed a despatch on the subject to our Foreign Secretary, suggesting that without awaiting the issue of the enquiry then pending into the financial situation, the examination of the great European problem "of the international status of the Suez Canal might be undertaken at once by means of a Conference or otherwise." In pursuance of this suggestion, a Commission consisting of two delegates from each of the six Great Powers and Turkey, besides a representative of the Khedive with a consultative voice, was appointed, and met at Paris on the 30th March, 1885, Great Britain being represented by Sir Julian Pauncefote and Sir

Charles Rivers Wilson, Comptroller-General of the National Debt Office. In addition to these representatives of the Great Powers, delegates were also sent by Spain and the Netherlands. Draft treaties were submitted to the Commission by both France and England, and referred to a Sub-Commission, which reported on the 15th June to its parent body, and laid before it the amended draft which had resulted from their deliberations. Every difference between this and the original proposals of Lord Granville has, of course, its significance as representing some divergence, real or imagined, between the various interests of the States concerned, and they are worth noting, therefore, on that account.

About Article I., which may be said to constitute the Charter of Nations, as regards the uses of the waterway, there was happily no dispute. The high contracting parties agreed that the "Suez Maritime Canal" should be "for ever free and open, in time of war as in time of peace, to every vessel of commerce or of war without distinction of flag"; that, consequently, they would not in any way interfere with the free use of the Canal in time of war as in time of peace; and in particular, that it should never be subjected to the exercise of the right of blockade.

Nor, of course, did any difficulty arise on such matters as those of maintaining the security of the Freshwater Canal, or of forbidding the erection of fortifications which might serve for an offensive operation against the Maritime Canal, or of undertaking to respect its plant, establishments, buildings, and works.

To the Article, however, forbidding the commission of any act of war "in the Canal, or in its approaches, or in its ports of access, or in the territorial waters of Egypt," the British and Italian representatives suggested as an amendment to the words within quotation marks that the definition of the exempted area outside the actual limit of the Canal itself should be expressed by the words, "and its ports of access as well as within a radius

of 3 marine miles from these ports," an amendment which was ultimately accepted.

The really important point of difference among the Powers—or rather between two of them—the difference which, no doubt, was the main cause of the long delay in concluding the Treaty, arose out of the conflicting aims of Great Britain and France. They are well defined in the Notes exchanged between the two Powers during the spring of 1885. The French proposals for maintaining the inviolability of the Canal were based, it was pointed out by Her Majesty's Government through their ambassador at Paris, "on the principle of active interference" in its control "by means of an International Commission and of armed vessels." Moreover, it was added, "they impose upon the signatory Powers the obligations of an international guarantee, as well as that of deciding what measures shall be taken in case of the inability of the Khedive to provide for the defence of the country and the enforcement of the proposed Treaty." And it appeared to Her Majesty's Government that these proposals did not tend to the completion of an arrangement upon the basis of the Lord Granville Circular of 1883, but were rather the embodiment of an opposite principle. This last proposition was, of course, disputed by the French Government, who contended that there was no divergence of principle between the two Powers, as both agreed in declaring for an inviolable freedom of navigation in the Canal, and only differed as to the means of preventing its violation. Their logical victory, however, if such it may be called, was a purely verbal one; for it is, of course, clear that the question whether or not a certain portion of a particular country is to be policed by that country itself or by a group of other nations, is something very much more than a question of detail. As a matter of fact, it raised a distinct issue of principle between France and Great Britain, the former endeavouring throughout the whole discussion to "internationalise" the Canal, while the latter strove to defend the independence and territorial rights of Egypt, of which she

was and still is the guardian. Ultimately, however, a compromise was agreed to in the form of an Article charging the agents in Egypt of the signatory Powers to watch over the due execution of the Treaty, and providing, in case of any event threatening the security or the free use of the Canal, that they should meet on the summons of three of their number, and inform the Khedivial Government of the danger which they may have perceived, in order that that Government should take proper steps to insure the protection and the free use of the Canal.

With the above amendments and modifications the Treaty was executed in October, 1888. The situation in which it leaves the Canal is a somewhat peculiar one. It is not "internationalised," nor is it even in the full sense of the word "neutralised." It is merely clothed, to quote a despatch of Lord Granville, with that neutrality "which attaches by international law to the territorial waters of a neutral State in which a right of innocent passage for belligerent vessels exists, but no right to commit any act of hostility." To a Power which commands the sea these restrictions are innocuous. As she can prevent their being turned to their disadvantage, she should be under no temptation to violate them. How they would stand the strain of war under difficult conditions is another question.

## CHAPTER V

### THE CLOUD IN THE SOUTH

THE territorial dominion of our country and her power beyond seas have in the course of our history been extended often by unconscious and sometimes by unwilling hands; but of all our Empire-builders *malgrè eux*, there has been none to compare in unreadiness and reluctancy with Mr Gladstone. It was the very irony of Fate that laid upon him, within the brief space of a five years' administration, the double task of two military expeditions which, the one by its success and the other by its failure, have been the direct or indirect causes, first of the establishment, and afterwards of the extension, of British authority in Egypt. Alike by victory and by defeat, Mr Gladstone was fated to enlarge the borders of that Imperial power for which he was always anxious to apologise, and to increase the burden of those Imperial responsibilities which he always contemplated with dismay. His term of office was scarce two years old when the British flag had been carried to the capital of Egypt; it had still some months to run when he involved our name in a disgrace and our arms in a disaster which were ultimately to be effaced and avenged by planting that flag on the citadel of Khartum. His resolution to advance and his determination to retreat were equally fruitful in results which he cordially detested, and contributed equally to a policy which he had spent his life in denouncing.

The end of the year 1882 was the dividing line between the period of advance and that of retreat. Arabi's rebellion had been quelled; the Khedive had been replaced upon his throne;

order and authority had been restored in Egypt; and the unwilling performer of these exploits firmly and finally resolved to bring his career as a conqueror and pacificator to a close. Come what might he was determined to set his face as a flint against all military enterprise for the future. Events, however, were "in the saddle," and were about to perform their well-known equestrian act of riding mankind. For among the things which might come in answer to the challenge "come what might," Mr Gladstone had not reckoned with the apparition of the Mahdi and the sudden outburst of the flames of fanatical insurrection in the Sudan. Out they burst, however, and it became a question as to what effect a conflagration enwrapping so large a portion of territory under the nominal sovereignty of the Khedive would have upon Mr Gladstone's settled motive to abstain from further military adventures on behalf of Egypt. As was not unusual with him, his first impulse, to which he readily yielded, was to ignore the whole matter. General Hicks, a retired officer of the British army, and by all accounts a brave and capable soldier, was at that time in command of the garrison at Khartum. Should he or should he not organise and take command of an expedition for the purpose of reducing the rebellious Mahdists? Mr Gladstone declined to answer the question. He treated, and apparently regarded it, as no concern of ours. He actually seemed to be of opinion that a Government which we had taken under our tutelage at Cairo might, outside a certain radius from the capital, have its authority shattered and its armies annihilated without our being thereby compelled to take any action on our own account in the matter. General Hicks had been in the habit of reporting to Sir Edward Malet, our Consul-General at Cairo. Well, he might continue to do so if he liked, and Sir Edward might continue to deliver these communications to the Egyptian Government. By so doing he need incur no more responsibility than a postman. And this although the gallant English soldier who was about to

be sent to disaster and death showed pretty clearly in these despatches that he knew what was in store for him if he were ordered to sally forth, and that he thought the British Government should know it likewise! The British Government did not share his opinion. They were, apparently, not in the least interested in the question whether the forty thousand Egyptian troops then in the Sudan were or were not capable of re-establishing the authority of the Khedive over the whole or any part of that region; nor yet in the further question, whether the better way of attempting this was to concentrate all the available military strength of Egypt on the defence of Khartum and the Central Sudan, or to despatch thence a scratch expedition of hopelessly inferior soldiers into a wilderness overrun by a brave, active, and powerful enemy.

The latter course was adopted, and on the 9th of September, 1883, a wretched mob of half-drilled and wholly chicken-hearted fellahin set out from Khartum, under the command of Hicks Pasha, to try conclusions with the fanatical followers of the Mahdi—born fighters to a man, and as familiar with all the dangers and devices of desert warfare as their unfortunate adversaries were with the cultivation of the Nile-side plots from which they had been dragged by the conscription. Their condition and their prospects of a successful campaign may be best judged from the account given of them by the special correspondent of an English journal, who shared their enterprise and their death. "I am writing," said O'Donovan, "under circumstances which bring me almost as near to death as it is possible to be, without being absolutely under sentence of execution, or in the throes of some deadly malady. . . . . in company with cravens whom you expect to see run every moment and leave you behind to face the worst."

A contest so unequal could have but one issue. Hicks Pasha and his army were known to have reached El Duem on September 24th; but after that they were no more seen

or heard of alive. They disappeared as completely as if swallowed up in the sands, leaving behind them no more vestige of their existence than remained of that army of Cambyses which had met with annihilation in the same desperate region more than two thousand years before. Months afterwards a few survivors of the lance and firelock of the Dervishes straggled back into Cairo to tell the tale, and it then became known that on the 5th November, at Shekan—about two days' journey from their goal, El Obeid—they were surrounded by an overwhelming host of their savage enemies, and annihilated.

For a little while there was some talk among the sanguine of the despatch of a second expeditionary force to retrieve the disaster, but the British Government would not for a moment entertain the idea. In the amplitude of his classical knowledge, if in nothing else, Mr Gladstone was equal to the occasion. He had the precedent of Cambyses at his fingers' ends, and subsequently quoted it with much edifying effect in the House of Commons. So far from favouring any resumption of the offensive against the Mahdists in the Sudan, the British Government were all eagerness to wash their hands of the whole troublesome business, which, of course, they could only do by directing the new Khedive to abandon the territory which was giving both him and them such an infinity of trouble. Major (now become Sir Evelyn) Baring had just been appointed Consul-General at Cairo in succession to Sir Edward Malet; and almost his first important official duty was the distasteful one of informing Tewfik Pasha of the decision of his British protectors. Baring had, of course, ample military support. General Stephenson, Sir Evelyn Wood, and General Baker met unofficially at his house, and after a full discussion of the subject, expressed themselves unanimously of opinion, "that the Egyptian Government will find it impossible, with the force at present at their disposal, to hold the Sudan, and that it will eventually

be necessary, after withdrawing the garrisons, to fall back from Khartum on to Egypt proper. They think that Khartum should, if possible, be held sufficiently long to allow the more advanced posts and detached garrisons in the Sudan to rejoin."

"Impossible with the force at present at their disposal." Therein lay the cardinal point of the whole of this expert judgment on the situation. The truth of the proposition, *per se*, was undeniable. The quality of the "force at present at the disposal" of the Egyptian Government had undergone a terribly conclusive test in the desert between Khartum and El Obeid; and it was quite certain that with another thirty or forty thousand, or, in fact, with any number of soldiers of the same efficiency and *morale*, the Egyptian Government would indeed find it impossible to hold the Sudan. The only question was, whether it was or was not expedient for Great Britain to supply the lacking strength from its own military resources; and this question Mr Gladstone, as has been said, had already decided in the negative. All things considered, one cannot be surprised at his decision. He may have made too much of the sinister omen of Cambyses; but we can see by the light of later knowledge that the reduction of the Dervishes—attacked as that task must necessarily have been attacked by us in those days, that is to say with practically no assistance from any native forces, and with none of the knowledge and experience subsequently acquired by us—would have been a truly formidable and most costly undertaking. The task which, after fifteen years laboriously spent in creating an efficient Egyptian army, and accumulating through an admirable Intelligence Department a map of invaluable information as to the strength and dispositions of our enemy, was accomplished with astonishing ease, would have been a very different matter in 1883. That it would have to be performed by us some day or other might possibly have been foreseen—conceivably was foreseen by far-sighted observers on the spot; but one may

suspect that even if Mr Gladstone had foreseen it himself, it would not have influenced his resolution. The words of Hamlet—with whom as regards the attitude of his will towards certain unpleasant duties Mr Gladstone had much in common—contract a new significance in this connection—

"... the readiness is all."

Yes! the readiness is all in such cases, and of readiness in this case there was none.

Sir Evelyn Baring was instructed to inform the Egyptian Government that the Sudan must be abandoned with all promptitude, and that any Minister who was not prepared to adopt this programme must go. The Prime Minister, Sherif Pasha, fell at once into the category, and resigned office. Riaz Pasha, who had been Minister of the Interior under Sherif, but who had resigned because he was not allowed to hang Arabi, could not be prevailed upon to take the retiring Minister's place, and it was only after prolonged solicitation—accompanied, it is said, by a threat from Sir Evelyn Baring that if no Egyptian statesman would act he would himself come down to the public departments and keep the machinery of State going provisionally, at any rate, with his own hands—that Nubar Pasha was induced to accept a post to which so unpopular a task was attached.

We are, however, somewhat anticipating the actual course of events. The resolution to evacuate the Sudan was taken by the Government in the latter days of November 1883. Sherif Pasha's resignation was not handed in until January 1884, and between these two dates a momentous step of policy had been determined on by the Cabinet in London. It was, in fact, at this critical juncture that they arrived at the most fateful and, indeed, as it proved, the most fatal decision of their career.

When they instructed the Khedive to abandon the Sudan, and to delineate the southern frontier of his territory for the future by an imaginary line drawn through Wady Halfa,

near the Second Cataract of the Nile, they were presumably aware that the withdrawal from a territory by its former ruler is not quite so simple a matter as the *déménagement* of a householder, or even the surrender of possession of a private landowner's estate. There were such things to be considered as populations and garrisons, neither of which could quite properly be left to extermination by the incoming tenants. But though presumably aware of these facts, the Government appear not to have realised their grave import, at any rate at the earlier stages of the affair. Although, as has been noted, their "advice" as regards the evacuation of the Sudan had been conveyed to the Khedive in November 1883, it does not seem to have occurred to them until the following January that His Highness had, according to the proverb, "got a wolf by the ears," and that to tell him to let go, and have nothing more to do with the animal, was almost as much a counsel of perfection as to exhort him to hold on. By this time, in fact, they had begun to appreciate the difficulty in which the Egyptian Government were placed as regards the withdrawal of the Khedive's subjects and soldiery from the abandoned territory. If the latter were not strong enough to hold the Sudan against the Mahdists, were they strong enough to escort the former out of it in safety? Nay, was it even in their power to make their own way back to the frontier of the reduced Egypt, through the encircling hosts of their foe? And if not, how were they to be helped to do so? Or were they to be helped at all? Could a British Government hope to reconcile British public opinion to their compelling the Khedive by "advice," which was notoriously equivalent to command, to leave a number of the garrisons and a large body of the civil population to be slaughtered or enslaved by a host of barbarians, without an attempt to rescue them? On the whole, Ministers were of opinion that they could not.

In such a dilemma the suggestion that, after all, the

garrisons and populations might possibly be extricated by pacific means must have seemed like balm in Gilead to our distracted Ministers, especially when accompanied by the specific indication of a person presumably able to perform the feat. From whom that indication was originally received will always, perhaps, remain a mystery. Some have attributed the idea of inviting General Gordon's intervention to one of the Ministers themselves; others profess to have traced it to the editor of a (then) sensational evening newspaper. Certain however it is, that no sooner had the idea suggested itself, or been suggested to Mr Gladstone and his colleagues, than it became even as the straw to the drowning man. Lord Granville, who was the first to become possessed of it, proceeded at once to summon a committee of the Cabinet, consisting of such of its members as happened to be in town. Lord Wolseley telegraphed to Gordon (who was then in Brussels, conferring with the king of the Belgians on the subject of a proposed mission to the Congo) to come to England at once. This he did, arriving in London at 6 A.M. on 16th January, and after a prolonged interview with Lord Wolseley he attended the committee of the Cabinet, consisting, it is understood, of Lord Hartington and Lord Northbrook, together with the Foreign Secretary, and the Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, Sir Charles Dilke. What passed at the interview has been thus concisely summarised by Gordon himself in a private letter:—

> At noon he, Wolseley, came to me and took me to the Ministers. He went in and talked to the Ministers, and came back and said: "Her Majesty's Government want you to undertake this. Government are determined to evacuate the Sudan, for they will not guarantee future government. Will you go and do it?" I said "Yes." He said "Go in." I went in and saw them. They said, "Did Wolseley tell you our orders?" I said "Yes." I said, "You will not guarantee future government of the Sudan, and you wish me to go up to evacuate now?" They said "Yes," and it was over, and I left at 8 P.M. for Calais.

So laconic a commission to perform the impossible is probably not elsewhere to be found on historic record. Gordon,

perhaps, has somewhat too severely summarised; and it may be that some brief reference was made to the practicability or otherwise of the task which the Government desired to impose upon him. But it is only fair to them to remember that any misgivings which they might have expressed on this point would in all probability have been easily allayed. After all, they were talking to an expert, and a renowned expert, in Central African affairs, and moreover to one who, as we now know, was at that time profoundly convinced of his own influence over the Sudanese tribes, and who no doubt firmly believed that on his reappearance among them they would, many of them, desert the Mahdi's standard to rally to their former Governor.

This, however, was not the opinion at Cairo. The Egyptian Government, our Consul-General reported, were "very much averse to employing General Gordon, mainly on the ground that the movement in the Sudan being religious, the appointment of a Christian in high command would probably alienate the tribes who remain faithful." Vigorous pressure, however, was applied from Downing Street to induce them to waive their objections, and they at last gave way. Gordon, however, who had started from England with the intention of going straight to Suakin, changed his destination *en route*, while, curiously enough, it was coincidently changed for him by our Consul-General after his journey had commenced. Sir Evelyn Baring telegraphed, expressing his satisfaction at Gordon's appointment, but adding: "I am of opinion that it would be useless for these officers to proceed to Suakin, as General Baker is doing all that can be done in that quarter with the means at his disposal. They (that is General Gordon and his companions) should first come to Cairo, and after discussing matters with myself and others proceed to Khartum." Pursuant to these arrangements, Gordon arrived at Cairo in the last week of January, and on the 26th of the month started from it for the city from which he was never

to return. At Korosko he quitted the Nile, to take that short cut across the desert which saves the huge loop of the river between Korosko and Abu Hamed. The lonely figure of our heroic envoy faring silently over the silent sands to his doom has inspired one of the most brilliant of our sculptors with the idea of a nobly impressive statue, and it will long live in the imagination and the memory of the English people.

The chapter of our history which opens with the entry of Gordon into the palace of Khartum, and closes with the march of the bloodthirsty Dervishes into the captured stronghold, is at once so glorious and so shameful, that if an Englishman were endowed with the power denied to the gods, of undoing the past, he might well hesitate whether to preserve or to destroy it. One would not willingly part with the inspiring story of Gordon's high-souled heroism, even to efface the record of that official cowardice, apathy, and irresolution to which he owed his fate. And we should hold the faster by the nobler memory, because Time, which only adds to its sanctity and splendour, has done something to mitigate the pain with which its baser side is recalled. The halo of Gordon's martyrdom grows more luminous with the years; while, although we do not and cannot forgive the default of those who allowed the sacrifice to be consummated, we understand it better, and are thus nearer to that full comprehension which, in the profound French saying, is but another word for pardon. Had the Ministers been capable of appreciating the character of their emissary, had they been able to measure the heights of his chivalry and to plumb the depths of his resolve, we cannot doubt that they would have realised the true proportions of the emergency, and have perceived and taken the path of duty before it was too late.

But we can see now that beneath and apart from all its other circumstances and conditions, the tacit compact between the Government and Gordon was initiated by a tragic misunderstanding. They believed, as he believed, that the mission

on which he was despatched was essentially a pacific one. They entertained, as did he also, the disastrous illusion that the revolted tribesmen of the Sudan would prove amenable to his conciliatory influence. Where they parted company with him was in holding—what he indignantly repudiated—the view that on proof of the hopelessness of his project of pacification he would regard his mission as at an end. And they were separated from him still further by their assumption that if in the prosecution of that mission he should have given any pledges of protection and rescue to the garrisons and people of the Sudan, he would be prepared, as they would be, to treat all such pledges as purely conditional, and subject to the proviso that they could be made good by the method of amicable negotiation with the enemy. What they could not anticipate or even conceive was that Gordon would treat these pledges as unconditional, inviolable, sacred, and that he would even regard them as binding, not only upon himself, but morally also upon the Power in whose name he had given them; that he would press the Government of that Power with untiring insistence to make them good, and that if British Ministers disavowed them, and declined or neglected to rescue the men whom, as their representative, he had promised to rescue, he at least would not desert them, but would remain among them and die with them at his post.

This determination of their devoted envoy they never understood, nor even, until it was too late, believed him seriously and inflexibly bent upon executing it. Up to the very moment before he was surrounded in Khartum and cut off from all communication with the outer world, they were still coquetting with the hope that he would be prevailed upon to provide for his personal safety by withdrawing from the city; and for as long as was possible, and much longer than was prudent, they even resisted—or at any rate Mr Gladstone resisted—the overwhelming evidence that such a withdrawal, even if he were willing to assent to it, had become impracticable. In other

words, after obstinately, and in the teeth of his repeated assurances, refusing to believe that he would not retire when he could, they adhered as obstinately to the belief that he could retire when as a matter of fact he could not. In short, the gravamen of their error lay not in sending Gordon on a quasi-diplomatic mission into a distracted region which could not possibly be dealt with by diplomatic methods, for they might well be excused for believing what their experienced emissary believed himself: it lay in their stubborn refusal to recognise the rapid development of that quasi-diplomatic mission into a warlike operation; to acknowledge, what was plain to all the world, that their ambassador had become a mere beleaguered soldier fighting for his life against an overwhelming swarm of enemies; and to undertake until too late those plain duties of support and relief which this change in the situation had imposed upon them.

Yet they could not pretend that they had been left long in ignorance of their new obligation. Gordon reached Khartum on the 18th of February, 1884, and before he had been there eight days he had discovered the impracticability of the policy of pacification. On the 28th of the month he wrote to Sir Evelyn Baring: "If Egypt is to be quiet, Mahdi must be smashed up. Remember that once Khartum belongs to Mahdi, the task will be far more difficult. . . . I repeat that evacuation is possible; but you will feel effect in Egypt, and will be forced to enter into a far more serious affair to guard Egypt." And later he writes: "I shall leave you the indelible disgrace of abandoning the garrisons of Sennaar, Kassala, Berber, and Dongola, with the certainty that you will eventually be forced to smash up the Mahdi under great difficulties if you would retain peace in Egypt."

Another, and a pathetic proof of Gordon's consciousness of his impotence for conciliatory purposes is to be found in his application to the Cairo Government for the assistance of Zebehr Pasha. Zebehr was a man infamous as the largest

dealer engaged in the Sudanese slave-traffic, and Gordon had from him bitter cause for enmity five years before, by the execution of his son Suleiman as a rebel. On the day of his departure from Cairo, Gordon had an interview with him at the Consul-General's house, and the report of their conference, as published in a Blue Book, showed that he still cherished animosity against the man who had not only sentenced his son to death, but had confiscated the father's property as the punishment of his proved complicity in Suleiman's revolt. Yet Gordon earnestly pressed to have Zebehr sent to Khartum, as the only man whose influence seemed at all likely to counterbalance that of the Mahdi with the Sudanese tribes. Baring's objections, at first very strong to this proposal, were in the end overcome by Gordon's insistence, and he consented to recommend the appointment to the authorities in Downing Street. But the Government shrank from the unpopularity of the step, and a prompt protest from the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society effectually knocked the project on the head. Gordon was to be left to face his formidable task alone.

Events, meanwhile, were occurring in the desert region between Khartum and the Red Sea which, though they redounded to the honour of the British arms, contributed in no small measure, in the opinion of one highly competent authority, to render Gordon's position desperate. The expedition from Suakin had been despatched some time before his arrival at Khartum. On 29th February General Graham defeated the Dervishes at El Teb, and on 13th March, a week or so after the appointment of Zebehr Pasha had been definitively vetoed by the Government, "the door of peace," according to Sir William Butler, was slammed at the battle of Tamai. Indecisive defeats like these served only to infuriate a savage enemy, whom the victors were too undecided of counsel to overawe and subdue.

Still, the Government, however firmly resolved not to undertake the task of "smashing up the Mahdi," might at

least have been expected to use their successes on the Suakin side of Egypt as a means of opening up communication with their emissary, and of affording him effective military support. They had come, indeed, to the parting of the ways. Up to this moment it was still possible for them to avoid the abyss of discredit towards which events and their own half-hearted counsels were hurrying them. And the loyal and honourable course was faithfully pointed out to them by Her Majesty's representative at Cairo. "The question," wrote Sir Evelyn Baring, on 28th March, "now is, how to get General Gordon and Colonel Stewart away from Khartum." And he continues:—

Unless any unforeseen circumstances should occur to change the situation, only two solutions seem to be possible. The first is to trust to General Gordon being able to maintain himself at Khartum till the autumn, when, by reason of the greater quantity of water, it would be less difficult to conduct operations on the Suakin-Berber road than it is at present. This he might, perhaps, be able to do, but it of course involves running a great risk. The only other plan is to send a portion of General Graham's army to Berber with instructions to open up communication with Khartum. There would be very great difficulty in getting to Berber; but if the road were once open it might be done by sending small detachments. General Gordon is evidently expecting help from Suakin, and he has ordered messengers to be sent along the road from Berber to ascertain whether any English force is advancing.

Then follow two sentences which will for ever stand on damning record against the Government to which they were addressed:—

Under present circumstances I think that an effort should be made to help General Gordon from Suakin, if it is at all a possible measure. General Stephenson and Sir Evelyn Wood, while admitting the very great risk to the health of the troops, besides the extraordinary military risks, are of opinion that the undertaking is possible. They think that General Graham should be further consulted. We all consider that however difficult the operations from Suakin may be, they are more practicable than any operations from Korosko and along the Nile.

How did the British Government reply to these representations, which to men of any foresight and resolution would have

been read as the most solemn of warnings? Lord Granville replied in an elaborate despatch covering several pages of a Blue Book, and constituting from beginning to end one long uneasy plea for continued inaction. Ministers had, of course, taken steps to fortify themselves, as it is always easy enough to do, with expert opinions adverse to those of the military authorities who were on the spot, and incomparably better able to judge of the question than even the best informed of their professional brethren at home. The Government, said Lord Granville, "had very carefully considered the demand for a military demonstration by a British force at Berber; they would not have willingly refused it, coming from General Gordon, with the additional weight of your concurrence; but"—and here follow the "regulation" objections which had been fully considered by our responsible military advisers in Egypt, and, with full recognition of their gravity, overruled—"the distance, the nature of the country to be traversed, and, above all, the climate, render the march of a British force to Berber at the present season an undertaking so difficult as to be almost impracticable. For a large body of European troops of all arms, the military authorities regard the expedition as impossible; while for a small force of cavalry to undertake the expedition without support or communications, in the face of possible opposition by largely superior numbers, would be an extremely hazardous venture, and might in the end prove useless."

But the real, the fatal, reason for the Government's refusal of assistance was to be found, not in these laboriously excogitated excuses for inaction, but in the significant sentences which follow, and which show that the Ministerial Micawber was simply waiting, as for many weeks to come he continued to wait, for "something to turn up."

The condition of affairs does not appear to be such as to call for measures attended by so much risk, and entailing possibly a great loss of life, and certainly large expenditure. There is reason to hope that the successful operations of General Graham in the neighbourhood of Suakin

may have wiped away the unfortunate impression produced by the defeat of the Egyptian troops, and may enable the road from Suakin to Berber to be opened by the friendly action of the tribes without the necessity of further military measures. It is understood that Khartum is provisioned for six months, and that its present garrison is sufficient for its security during that period from any attack by the Arab tribes, who are without artillery.

It is curious to note the reliance of the Government—if a "reason to hope" can be regarded as reliance—in the beneficial effect of the very events which strike Sir William Butler as having in all probability sealed Gordon's doom. General Graham's successful operations in the neighbourhood of Suakin might, Lord Granville thinks, enable the Berber road to be opened "by the friendly action of the tribes." But of what tribes? Of the tribes who had been cut up and routed by General Graham's force? It does not seem a very hopeful way of securing their friendly action; while as to any other tribes who might have been willing to help us but for their fear of the Mahdists, it surely should not have been necessary to point out to any intelligent person that such potential friends were not likely to be converted into actual helpers by the policy of "slaughter and scuttle;" that nothing would induce them to rally to us short of a well-grounded conviction that the British forces under General Graham intended to follow up their "successful operations" by clearing the whole country of their savage enemies, from Khartum to the littoral of the Red Sea.

This long despatch of Lord Granville under date of 29th March was in effect Gordon's death-warrant. Whatever was to be done to save him from beleaguerment in Khartum should have been done during the next fortnight at latest. He could only be succoured from the side of Suakin, and the British forces by which the Dervishes had been again and again defeated in that region should have been ordered to act at once. The Government, however, had made up their minds to accept any responsibility except that of "further military operations." They were hoping, as we have seen,

that some miracle would happen to relieve them of the necessity for action; that the ferocious fanatics of the False Prophet would all of a sudden be converted into "friendly tribes;" that Khartum, "provisioned for six months," would develop unsuspected defensive strength; or lastly — and to this hope no doubt they clung more tenaciously than to any other — that something would "turn up." But as the weeks wore on and no news arrived of any change in the situation, they began to grow uneasy. What if, after all, the "condition of affairs" was such as really to call for the action which Lord Granville, on the 28th of March, had represented to be premature. Comfortable as it was to hold this opinion about measures "attended with much risk" and "entailing, possibly, a great loss of life, and certainly large expenditure," the consequences of being mistaken in that opinion, and thereby becoming responsible for the death of a national hero would be quite the reverse of comfortable. Governments had been driven from office for less; and it was unpleasant to think that if the Mahdists captured and slaughtered Gordon, the second Gladstone Administration might actually fall before a vote of censure in the House of Commons. Lord Granville became so uneasy from a month's pondering these considerations, that on the 23rd April he thus unfolded his mind in a telegram to Sir Evelyn Baring:—

Gordon should be at once informed in cipher by several messengers at some intervals between each, through Dongola as well as Berber, or in such other way as may on the spot be deemed most prompt and certain, that he should keep us informed to the best of his ability, not only as to immediate, but as to any prospective danger at Khartum; that, to be prepared for any such danger, he advise us as to the force necessary in order to secure his removal, its amount, character, route of access to Khartum, and time of operation; that we do not propose to supply him with Turkish or other force for the purpose of undertaking military expeditions, such being beyond the scope of the commission he holds, and at variance with the pacific policy which was the purpose of his mission to the Sudan; and that, if with this knowledge he continues at Khartum, he should state to us the cause and the intention with which he so continues.

The last question was, as a matter of fact, superfluous. Gordon had, a fortnight before, informed Baring of the cause of his continuing at Khartum. He had already begun to contemplate his falling into the hands of the Mahdists as a well-defined if not a near possibility, and he writes characteristically that he does not "see the fun of being caught here, to walk about the streets as a Dervish for years with sandalled feet; not that (*D.V.*) I will ever be taken alive; but," he adds:—

> It would be the climax of meanness, after I had borrowed money from the people here, and had called upon them to sell their grain at a low price, etc., to go and abandon them without making any effort to redress them; and I feel sure that, whatever you may feel diplomatically, I have your support—and that of every man professing himself a gentleman—in private.

It is, of course, unnecessary to point out that this is language to which official ears are wholly unaccustomed, and that it transfers official communications to an entirely unfamiliar region. We cannot be surprised that Her Majesty's Government—to whom we know for a fact that it was transmitted over the wire on April 18th—preferred to take no notice of it whatever. It would have been impossible for Lord Granville—a gentleman himself in every sense of the word—to deny the correctness of the standard of conduct to which Gordon here declared his intention of conforming, and to which he claimed conformity from "every man professing himself a gentleman." And on the other hand it would have been difficult to the point of impossibility for the Foreign Secretary to declare with blunt cynicism that in his official capacity he could neither observe this standard of conduct himself nor recognise any duty on the part of his agents to fulfil its obligations. *La politique n'a pas d'entrailles* is a maxim which many kind-hearted statesmen have brought themselves to accept and to act upon; but few of those who are prepared to deny any place in politics to policy would be equally willing to exclude honour.

Lord Granville, therefore, acted wisely, or, at any rate,

naturally enough, in absolutely ignoring Gordon's appeal to the gentleman's code of ethics, and in discussing Gordon's withdrawal from Khartum calmly in a despatch written four days later as though no such appeal had ever been brought to his knowledge. But, though he refrained from noticing it in the sense of remarking upon it, he might, and ought to have noticed it in the sense of taking note of it. It was a thing to be remembered, if it could not be (and indeed all the more because it could not be) answered. For nothing could have given Mr Gladstone and his colleagues a clearer intimation—or rather a more significant reminder—of what manner of man he was with whom they had to do. If they had hitherto underestimated the element of selfless chivalry in his nature, they had no longer any shred of excuse for their miscalculation. From that hour forward they might have dismissed from their minds the vain imagination of his willingness in the last resort to save himself by the abandonment of those whom he had come to save; and once assured of what they should have been convinced of long before—that he would die at his post if they failed to relieve him—the urgency of timely action and the danger of delay might possibly have appeared to them in a very different light.

This, however, was not to be; indeed, if they had only now been awakened to this full sense of their responsibilities, it would have been too late, not indeed to extricate Gordon, but to prevent him from being taken in the toils. Nothing, as has been said, could have prevented that save prompt and vigorous action taken immediately after the battle of Tamai. But the precious weeks between the 13th of March and the end of the month were allowed to slip unused away; and from the beginning of April events moved rapidly forward to the isolation of our doomed emissary. On the 9th of the month the Bahr-el-Ghazal province fell into the power of the Dervishes, and on the 19th, three days after Gordon had penned his indignant bequest to the Government of "the indelible disgrace

of abandoning the garrisons of Sennaar, Kassala, Berber and Dongola," all communication with Khartum was cut off. [illegible] another month of silence was to pass while the hosts of the Mahdi were gathering round the city. On the 19th of May Berber fell, and with it disappeared the last possibility of employing that stronghold as a *point d'appui* for any future attempt at the relief of Khartum. Its capture was a striking event, and ranks, naturally perhaps on that account, as one of the landmarks in this sombre history; but as a matter of fact its fate had months before been irrevocably sealed. The date of real importance is the 19th of the previous month, when the Dervish hordes completed the investment of the city of Khartum. From that day until within a week of the final catastrophe no word or sign reached his countrymen from the devoted prisoner within its walls. More than one plan of communication with him was suggested from time to time by the distracted Government. On the 15th of May Lord Granville telegraphed to Cairo to know if delivery of a message to Gordon could be assured by expenditure of money, or communication be made by means of Zebehr or Hassan Pasha. To this Mr Egerton replied over the wire that "Zebehr would find a man to go to Khartum for £50 down, and £400 for bringing answer within fifty days. Shall I agree?" And the answer ran: "Her Majesty's Government agree to the proposal, and would be prepared to double the amount offered, if the man returned within thirty days. They would, however, wish the messenger to delay his departure until you have received a further message for General Gordon, which will be telegraphed to you."

This further message was a curious one. It amplified the despatch of the 23rd of April to the extent of recognising for the first time that there were people in the Sudan to whom Gordon conceived himself to be bound, and Lord Granville writes:—

As the original plan for the evacuation of the Sudan has been dropped,

and an aggressive operation cannot be undertaken with the countenance of Her Majesty's Government, General Gordon is enjoined to consider, and either to report upon or, if possible, to adopt at the earliest moment measures for his own removal and for that of the Egyptians at Khartum who have suffered for him, or who have served him faithfully, including their wives and children, by whatever route he may consider best, having especial regard for his own safety and that of the other British subjects.

What reception their instructions would have had from Gordon we do not know. Probably they would have elicited from him a few such caustic remarks as were provoked by Mr Egerton's telegram in much the same terms of an earlier date, but it never reached him. The runner whom Zebehr was to have provided to go to Khartum for £50 down, and £400 for bringing answer within fifty days, and £800 if within thirty days, was not to be found, or if he was, Zebehr did not care to produce him. No message was sent, no reward was earned. The silence remained unbroken and the veil unlifted, until the belated expedition under Sir Charles Wilson sighted Gordon's steamers at Metemmeh just four days before his death.

## CHAPTER VI

### THE STORY OF KHARTUM

FROM the 19th April, 1884, to the 26th January, 1885, run 282 days; and thus long was the period of what, were one speaking of any other man than Gordon, one would have called his agony. Many a soldier who would have calmly and even joyously faced death on the battlefield might have broken down under the strain of those months of terrible suspense. At no time could it have seemed certain to the beleaguered soldier that his rescue was impossible; yet at no time could he have sustained himself in hours of weariness and depression by the belief that it was probable, still less that it was near. Not to know the worst, yet at the same time to lack all encouragement to hope for the best, is an ordeal equally well calculated to dash the spirits of the sanguine and to sap the fortitude of the strong. The cheerfulness of many a mercurial spirit would have sunk under it; the patience of many a sterner temperament would have given way; and, to both alike, the temptation to end it all by some desperate act of self-exposure might well have proved irresistible.

But Gordon, whether on the more serious or the lighter side of his character, was not like other men. To the moral support of a courage which nothing could daunt, and an endurance proof against all trials, he added intellectual resources of composed, of cheerful, nay, of humorous reflection, which the happiest and securest of his far-off fellow-countrymen might with reason have envied him. The daily record of his inner life during those long months of waiting has been preserved

for us in journals which are almost as precious a possession of the English race as his memory and his example. In the solitude of his confinement he had abundant leisure to speculate on the future of the distracted region to which he had come to die, and ample opportunity to review with penetrating insight, and a spice of not unkindly satire, the characters and conduct of those official personages with whom he had lately had to do, and even to add here and there touches of humorous self-portraiture which are, perhaps, the most interesting of all. Never did condemned man leave behind him a diary which, while bearing such high testimony to his deeper qualities of self-devotion and religious faith, gave at the same time so delightful a picture of the man.

But it is time to turn from the contemplation of Gordon in his lonely vigil at Khartum, to the less elevating spectacle presented by Her Majesty's Government at Westminster. Let us for a moment recall one or two incidents and dates. It was on the 19th April, 1884, that communication with Khartum was finally cut off, and it was precisely on the same day of the following month that the fall of Berber extinguished the last possibility of adopting what all the most competent authorities agreed in pronouncing the most hopeful scheme of relief. But even before the earlier of these events, the position of Gordon had begun to arouse anxiety in the House of Commons—a feeling which, if it had been much less legitimate than it was, would probably not have been allowed by Lord Randolph Churchill and the Fourth Party to languish for lack of stimulus. As early as the 16th March, indeed, the leader of that party had endeavoured to induce the House to refuse its assent to the third reading of the Consolidated Fund Bill before "receiving further information as to the military operations in the Sudan, the position of General Gordon at Khartum, and the policy of Her Majesty's Government in Egypt Proper." In the course of the slashing speech which Lord Randolph had always ready on such occasions, he asked "which of the two policies were the

Government going to adopt—the 'rescue' or the 'retire'? [illegible] added the following significant words:—"There was one [illegible] which the Government, if they did not adopt it very [illegible] would be compelled to adopt, or they would have to mal[illegible] for others—the rescue of General Gordon. He did not [illegible] that even honourable Members who were in favour of a [illegible] policy carried to an extravagant degree would object to [illegible] measures being taken without delay for the rescue of G[illegible] Gordon. If the matter were left to chance, and General Gordon were sacrificed, owing to the neglect, and indifference, and callousness, and heartlessness of the Government, then they would not keep their seats for twenty-four hours after the news was known." The event showed that Lord Randolph considerably over-rated the swiftness of the retribution which overtook the Government, and, of course, he could not foresee that it would take the grotesque shape of a defeat on a question of taxing alcoholic liquors; but their punishment, though delayed, was unmistakable.

For the next five or six weeks the Government were plied almost nightly with questions as to the position of Gordon and the tenor of the advices which they received from him; and it was on the 21st of April, two days after his complete isolation, that Mr Gladstone, compelled at last to make a partial avowal of the gravity of the situation, drew one of the subtlest and most famous of all his subtle distinctions. After describing the condition of Shendy and Berber as reported to him in the latest despatches from Cairo, the Prime Minister said that with regard to Khartum itself, the information contained in their last telegram from General Gordon was, so far as the question of Gordon's position was concerned, in complete concurrence with what had reached them from Sir Evelyn Baring, "the general effect being, according to the expression used, that he is hemmed in—that is to say, that there are bodies of hostile troops in the neighbourhood forming a more or less complete chain around it. I draw a distinction between that

and the town being surrounded, which would bear technically a very different meaning." Whether, however, there was much practical difference in the meaning would depend upon whether the "more or less complete chain" of hostile forces around Khartum was, as a matter of fact, a "more" or a "less" complete one, and as such matter of fact we know now, at any rate, that it was complete enough to prevent any communication with Gordon for the next nine months, and, indeed, until the eve of his death at his post.

On the following night, and again a week later, the Government were interrogated as to their adhesion to the opinion that the "position of General Gordon is one of security at Khartum," and with the same unsatisfactory result. On the 1st May the Prime Minister was asked in so many words whether he was able to state to the House when the Government intended to send an expedition for the relief of General Gordon. Mr Gladstone replied that he had no statement to make on the subject. On the following day Sir Michael Hicks Beach gave notice of a motion expressive of the regret of the House to find that "the course pursued by Her Majesty's Government has not tended to promote the success of General Gordon's mission, and that even such steps as may be necessary to secure his personal safety are still delayed." The debate upon it opened on the 12th of March, and it was in the course of Mr Gladstone's reply to the speech of the mover that he uttered the memorable and often quoted declaration that an attempt to put down the Mahdist insurrection in the Sudan would be a "war of conquest against a people rightly struggling to be free." It was, he said, the duty of the Government to ask Gordon's "advice and opinion" (the advice of a man who had been nearly two months cut off from all communication with them!) "as to the best mode and circumstances, and form and time of affording him succour, should the necessity arise." The motion was defeated, but the Government, considering their then strength in the House

of Commons, had, comparatively speaking, a narrow escape. Their majority fell to twenty-eight, and probably they recognised from that moment that, whatever their own individual prepossessions or collective differences on the question might be, Parliamentary supported by national purpose would eventually compel them to take action.

Nevertheless, they still delayed even the formal announcement of their willingness to do so. On the 17th May Mr Gladstone parried with generalities a question put to him as to whether any actual preparations had been made up to that date to organise an expedition for the relief of General Gordon. Lord Hartington's contribution to the discussion was a little more reassuring, but not much. In answer to an ironical suggestion by Lord Randolph Churchill that the Government would begin in October to think what measures of relief could be taken, the Secretary for War said: "The Government are thinking now, and have long been thinking, what measures they could take for the relief of General Gordon."

On the 11th July the Government were again questioned, and on the 18th July they were pressed to say whether they "still considered it inexpedient to take steps for the relief of General Gordon," but in each case without effect. And up to the very last day of the session of 1884 their replies were in the same strain. They contented themselves with taking a vote of credit, for the purpose—as Lord Hartington put it in answer to a question addressed to him on the 11th August—of "putting themselves in a position, if necessary, to adopt measures for the relief of General Gordon," and at the present moment, added the Secretary for War, they were "taking active measures in discharge of their responsibility." Not till after Parliament had risen did it become a matter of public knowledge that this phrase of Lord Hartington's meant the despatch of a relief expedition, and the second week in August

had expired before its precise nature and the *modus operandi* were announced to the world.

For the Government, after having spent, say, half the time between the 19th April and the 12th August in resisting the project of an expedition, had consumed the remainder of their sixteen weeks in debating its character and route. That this latter question was an eminently debatable one is true; but the truth is, unfortunately, one which only strengthens the condemnation of those who so long delayed to consider it. According to one set of authorities the true and only way to relieve Khartum was by railway from Suakin to Berber. To this view another body of experts was vehemently opposed. That route, they pointed out, had many mountains, with passes three and four thousand feet above sea-level, while for distances of eighty miles it ran through a waterless region, with the enemy swarming around each terminus of the proposed line. Such a railway would, they contended, take two years' campaign and two years' labour to make. Nature, on the other hand, had pointed out the proper route of advance, namely, by a river which in its long reaches of open water afforded easy transport for men and stores, and, even at its most difficult cataract, insured to an expedition that first necessary of desert warfare—water.

It was undeniably right and proper that these two contending opinions should be carefully weighed, one against the other, only the process should have been completed some three months before. It was not until the 12th August that the plan of a boat expedition, first advocated many weeks earlier by Lord Wolseley, and often urged by him during the intervening period, was at last sanctioned. The vote of credit for the expenses of the campaign had been obtained, as we have seen, during the last days of the session, and on the 26th August Lord Wolseley was formally appointed to its command.

Another month, however, had to elapse before the boat destined to carry the men and food over the cataracts were

beginning to arrive at Alexandria, while [illegible] to form the column which was to mar[illegible] the river at Korti across the desert to [illegible] yet left England. The day on which [illegible] the relief-expedition steamed away from [illegible] September—was one of ill-omen for the fu[illegible] for it was on that very day that the [illegible] Power started up the Nile in the *Abbas* with Gordon's despatches, on a journey which was to end in the slaughter of the two messengers by the Dervishes, the destruction of the steamer, and the capture of the papers, among which unluckily were some which gave the fullest details of all stores and food remaining in the city up to the 9th September, with the exact strength of the garrison and population still surviving. Then it became possible for the Dervishes to calculate to a day how long Khartum would hold out, and from that time forth the siege, which had till then been slack, was ever more and more closely pressed.

September waned and expired while the expedition was still laboriously getting under way, and the first, the second, the third week of October passed before it had completed the first of the three stages of its journey. On the 21st of the month it was still at Wady Halfa, struggling with difficulties of transport, lack of coal, and administrative hitches. Two hundred boats had reached this point, but were still waiting at the foot of the Second Cataract, and November was nearly a week old before the first company of British infantry was embarked for Khartum.

Meanwhile, the prospects of the beleaguered garrison were [illegible]dily darkening as that month wore on. On the 12th of [illegible]vember the Dervishes made a resolute attack upon Omdur[illegible]n, and one of Gordon's remaining steamers was utterly [illegible]bled by shell-fire. But a more urgent source of danger [illegible]n than that which threatened him from without was now [illegible]inning to weigh upon his mind. His diary, under date

of 11th November, contains the pathetic entry—"Truly I am worn to a shadow with the food question. It is one continued demand."

With reason might he thus write, for there was then not fifteen days' food in the whole town. From the accounts of soldiers and slaves who escaped the final catastrophe, the most painful details were afterwards gathered as to the straits to which the garrison were reduced before the fatal day arrived. Actual starvation had then set in, and "rats and mice, the leather of boots, the straps and plaited strips of native bedsteads, the gum of the mimosa, the inner fibre of the palm-tree, were all eagerly devoured." Yet everything had been done to reduce the demand by enforced reduction of the number of "useless mouths." Fifteen thousand of the townspeople had been sent out to the camp of the Mahdi. Great numbers had perished of disease and want; the remaining population of the city did not exceed 14,000. And the enemy was still pressing the attack by day and night, and relief seemed as far off as ever.

December came and brought no gleam of hope. On the 14th of that month, the day when Gordon was making the last entry in his journal, the leading troops in boats and on camels had just reached Korti, the point at which the caravan route crosses the desert to Metemmeh. But though every hour must now have been felt to be of importance, it was yet impossible to proceed at once. A halt of sixteen precious days had to be made, and it was not till the last day but one of the year 1884, just about the time when the food supplies of the unhappy garrison were exhausted, that the march could be resumed. Even then, however, the rate of advance was painfully slow. The column was short of baggage animals, and could only move forward its men and stores in detachments, halting its first body of troops at Gakdul, little more than half the way to Metemmeh, and there forming a depôt, while the camels plodded back to Korti to bring on

another detachment of men and stores. The entire column could not be concentrated at Gakdul till the 12th January, and then so exhausted were the camels by their thrice-repeated journey that a rest of sixty hours became necessary before the expedition could resume its march.

Gakdul, however, was the last point of its unopposed advance. From that point onward it had to make its way with the sword, and for another week to come its path was marked with blood. The Dervishes—whose intelligence department, like that of all rapidly moving warriors of the desert, served as they are by hardy and untiring scouts, was a singularly strong point in their organisation, and had no doubt kept them well informed of the movements of the expedition at every stage of its advance—now judged it time to oppose its progress by force. On the 17th of January they fell upon the column in great strength at the wells of Abu Klea, but after a sharp engagement, in which their fanatical bravery was strikingly displayed, they were driven back. A gloom, however, was thrown over the victory by the loss of its commander, Sir Herbert Stewart, who was mortally wounded in the action, and was succeeded in the command by Sir Charles Wilson. Again on the 17th of January a strong body of Dervishes were encountered near Metemmeh; again they attacked, and again they were routed. On the evening of the same day the Nile was reached at Gubat, and the long desert journey with its heart-breaking delays and the fierce conflicts of its closing stages was at an end. The one hope in every heart, though faintest perhaps in that of the commander, was that they might be in time.

By the night of the 20th the entire column was collected on the left bank of the river about three miles south of Metemmeh; on the morning of the 21st Gordon's four steamers were sighted, and communication was at last effected with the garrison. From Gubat to Khartum—which, though only 100 miles distant, is divided from it by the Sixth Cataract—is a four

or five days' journey, and Khartum did not fall till four days after Gubat was reached. Three days, however, were allowed to pass before the steamer left with the relief-party for Khartum, and not unnaturally therefore a cry was raised in England at the time, and has been in recent years re-echoed by a biographer of Gordon, that the failure of the expedition was due to this three days' delay. In his published narrative of the march from Korti to Khartum, Sir Charles Wilson has justified his dispositions in a defence of much ability, which, however, it would interrupt the course of my narrative to deal with here. Avoidably or unavoidably, with harmless or with fatal results, three days passed after the arrival of the column at Gubat before the march was resumed.

On the morning of the 24th January two of the steamers started for Khartum, carrying Sir Charles Wilson and a small detachment of English soldiers of the Sussex Regiment. It was nearly mid-day on the 28th January ere the boats, having cleared the cataract, approached the island of Futi, whence one obtains the earliest sight of Khartum. Every heart must have sunk at the omen that first met the eye. No flag was flying from the roof of the Palace. As yet, however, they were too far off to be able to descry signs of life in the city or around it, even if such signs there were. Onward then they steamed for another half-hour till the city was in full view; and then came assurance of the dreadful truth. They were being received, not with joyful signals of welcome from a relieved garrison, but with the boom of hostile guns opening fire upon the advancing steamers, with the rattle of musketry leaping from point to point along the shore. There are flags visible now, but these are the battle-flags of the Mahdi; the crowds which have suddenly started into life on the river-side, and over the sandy point below the town, wear the strange uniform of the Dervishes, and it is their wild shout of triumph which fills the ear. Khartum had fallen, and the heroic Englishman, who had dared and endured so much in the vain attempt at its rescue, was slaughtered or a captive!

Not till long afterwards were the full details of the tragedy ascertained, even the fate of Gordon hanging for some time in doubt. But it became known at last that the successful assault of the Dervishes was delivered early on the morning of the 26th January, and that the assailants, having overborne the resistance of the weakened and dispirited defenders of the fortifications, swept through the streets of the city and made their way to the Palace, on the steps of which, with two or three of his more devoted followers round him, stood Gordon, calmly confronting that death which had been creeping daily nearer and nearer to him through all these weary months. He fell by a revolver shot, and was decapitated after his death by his savage foes. The Khalifa caused the bloodstained head to be flung in brutal triumph at the feet of Slatin Pasha.

This is no place in which to revive the miserable war of charge and counter-charge, of attack and recrimination, which raged around this disastrous issue, the most disastrous, perhaps, that any British military expedition has ever met with. Experts may be left to decide whether the three days' halt was or was not avoidable: history is concerned, not so much with the wisdom or unwisdom, the necessity or the needlessness of the delay, as with the question of the importance or unimportance of the result. Sir Charles Wilson might have been guilty of the worst of strategical errors in not advancing on the 21st instead of on the 24th, but once we are satisfied that the earlier start would not have enabled him to effect the rescue of Gordon, we may willingly leave the question of his strategy to his biographer.

And on the former of these questions very cogent arguments in his favour have been put forward, both by himself and by others on his behalf. It was urged by the latest of his critics that, though it might have been impossible to advance his force on the 21st of January, the despatch of a party of even fifty men on that day, so as to have reached Khartum on the 24th or 25th, might have enabled Sir Charles Wilson

to "snatch the chestnuts out of the fire and convert the most ignominious failure in the military annals of the country into a creditable success." So small a party could not, it is true, have raised the siege or caused the instant retreat of the whole Mahdist army, but it would have enabled the one solitary man on whom the whole burden of the protracted defence had fallen, borne down by physical exhaustion and constant watching, to hold out for the few days or weeks longer, until larger reinforcements could arrive.

In giving up the contention, however, that immediate relief could have been effected by the step suggested, the critic of the British commander (it was pointed out in answer to him) gives up his whole case. He forgets that the garrison had reached starvation point some time before. Gordon's rescue was in fact conditional upon the retiring force arriving either in sufficient strength to raise the siege, or with the means at their disposal of revictualling the garrison. And as the first feat would have been miraculous if performed by fifty men, so a second miracle would have been necessary to convey food to them "either from the desert column itself, in face of a demoralised enemy, or from the river column, struggling amid unknown rapids hundreds of miles in the rear." And thus contemptuously does the defender of Sir Charles Wilson dismiss the controversy. "By an extraordinary chance," he says, "it became possible to persuade the large portion of the public, which does not trouble itself with facts, that an expedition, which was more than two months too late, only missed success by a few hours. It is surely time that this precious fiction was treated as it deserves."

It seems to me impossible for any unprejudiced student of these events to withhold his assent from this judgment. We have noted the attitude of the Government in the House of Commons during the long four months and a half which elapsed between the latter days of March and the end of the first week in August; we have followed the faltering steps of

official action, and watched through the repeated intervals of administrative inaction, throughout August, throughout September, and onward till the tardy departure of the even then but half-equipped expedition; and I cannot find reason to modify one word of a judgment which has been deliberately expressed before and elsewhere that, "not at Gubat in January 1885, but at Westminster in the summer of 1884 was the doom of Gordon sealed. The unwillingness of the Government to admit that any relief expedition was needed at all, their doubts and hesitations as to its character and route, their prolonged and disastrous delay in equipping and despatching it, to these causes, and to no other, was the final tragedy due; and its sad and shameful *dénoûment* was written in the book of Fate before a single camel knelt on the desert sand to receive its burden, or a single boat was launched on the waters of the Nile."

## CHAPTER VII

### LORD DUFFERIN AND RE-ORGANISATION

It was not till after the fall of Khartum and the definitive abandonment by the British Government of any attempt to influence the future of the Sudan, that the agents of that Government in Egypt were able to address themselves seriously to the work of internal re-organisation. More than two years before, Lord Dufferin, it will be remembered, had been despatched by Mr Gladstone and his colleagues to examine into and report upon the situation, and to propose specific measures by which that work might best be carried out. It was in the autumn of 1882 that our envoy arrived in Egypt, just, as was remarked above, at the time when the threatening clouds of fanatical rebellion became visible on her southern horizon. In view, accordingly, of the crisis then impending in the Sudan, it was not deemed advisable to interrupt the course of the narrative in order to give an account of Lord Dufferin's mission. His first official act on arriving at Cairo had reference only to the temporary phase of the situation. The trial of Arabi Pasha, which had been dragging on for six weeks, was brought by the influence of our representative to a prompt conclusion. The prisoner pleaded guilty to the charge of "rebellion," and was sentenced to death by a court-martial on the following day—a sentence which was immediately commuted by the Khedive to one of perpetual exile, a return to Egypt being punishable with death. This act of clemency led to the resignation and reconstruction of the Egyptian Ministry, but it was doubtless a necessary step for the British Government to insist on.

Arabi's case disposed of, Lord Dufferin was at leisure to commence his investigations, which he pursued with so much diligence during the next few weeks that he was able on the last day of the year to forward the first instalment of his scheme of reform. It was not, however, till the second month of the new year that he was in a position to render a full account of the situation.

The Report transmitted by him to the British Government on the 6th February 1883, which contained the total results of his inquiry and his various recommendations of reform, was of a singularly and—having regard to the immaturity of the moment—impracticably comprehensive description. It contained elaborate proposals for the re-organisation of every institution and service, civil and military, and the solution of every problem connected therewith, in Egypt. It dealt at great length, and with considerable minuteness of detail, with the army, the provincial constabulary, the urban police, the central legislative, and local administrative system of the country, the court of justice, the machinery of canalisation and irrigation, the cadastral survey, the indebtedness of the fellahin, the assessment of the land revenue, the corvée, the conscription, the employment of Europeans in Egyptian service, the slave-trade, the Sudan, education, and finance. It was drafted with all the literary skill of its accomplished author, and is for that reason delightful reading even at the present day, though the occasional appearance of such passages of rhetorical metaphor, unfamiliar enough in the prosaic pages of Blue Books, as that in which he describes the Egyptian fellah as, "like his own Memnon, not irresponsive to the beams of the new dawn of civilization," and says of him, "that his lips have trembled if they have not articulated," inspires a certain distrust in the practical recommendations of the orator-diplomatist.

As a matter of fact, however, with perhaps the exception of the proposed representative system, which is wholly academic and unpractical, Lord Dufferin's recommendations were sound

in principle, and only unsuitable for adoption because the time was not yet ripe for carrying them out. No moment, however, is ever likely to be favourable for the establishment in Egypt of such a system as Lord Dufferin shadowed forth in his section on this subject, and summed up in his "Synopsis of Proposed Egyptian Institutions." They were to consist of—

(1.) *The Village Constituency:* to be composed of representatives of each circumscription, chosen by manhood suffrage, who are the depositaries of the village vote.
(2.) *The Provincial Councils:* composed of a varying number of from four to eight Members, chosen by the spokesmen of the villages.
(3.) *The Legislative Council:* to consist of twenty-eight Members, of whom twelve are nominated by the Khedive on the advice of his Ministers, and sixteen are elected by the Provincial Councils.
(4.) *The General Assembly:* to consist of eighty Members, viz. eight Ministers; twenty-six Members of the Legislative Council; forty-six Delegates, elected by the spokesmen of the villages.
(5.) Eight Ministers responsible to the Khedive.
(6.) His Highness the Khedive.

Lord Dufferin goes out of his way to state the objection that "the foregoing machinery does not really embody the Parliamentary principle in the true acceptation of the term, both the Council of Legislation and the General Assembly being consultative rather than law-making bodies"; and proceeds to reply to it, with a gravity that reads almost like irony, that "few people would be prepared to maintain that Egypt is yet ripe for pure popular government." Few indeed! But perhaps not many now would be prepared to affirm that even the modified form of Parliamentary system has, or is ever likely to have, the slightest chance of striking root in a country like Egypt. As its author rightly says, the arrangements above proposed are "a far more bold and generous move in the direction of self-government than anything the most revolutionary English statesman has dared to suggest for that country." We need not, however, be surprised at the Khedive's advisers being

willing to go to the extent indicated, or at Lord Dufferin's subsequent intimation that they contemplated the establishment of a Privy Council; or even at his still further announcement that the "project of a Decree, or rather a Charter, regulating the constitutional fabric in accordance with the leading principle above indicated, has been already planned, and on receiving the approval of Her Majesty's Government will be still further elaborated." The best proof that the Khedive's advisers had nothing to fear from their willing assent to these impracticable reforms is that we have not heard a word more about them from that day to this.

Few, if any, of the reforms projected in Lord Dufferin's report are so Utopian as this. In nearly all other matters he not only laid his finger at once on the ailing spot, but the remedies he suggested, if frequently incapable of immediate application, were always sound in themselves, and have in many instances been subsequently applied. His remarks on the irrigation service, as affected by the control and distribution of the water, went straight to the heart of the question. He showed clearly that what obstructed improvement in this case was, not material, but moral difficulties, and that unless, and until, we attacked and swept away administrative abuses, it would be useless to cut a single additional culvert or build a single additional dam. These abuses arose, as he pointed out, from the arbitrary powers intrusted to the engineers, who regulated the construction of dams and sluices and the erection of pumps to suit the convenience of rich proprietors, or of the influential inhabitants of large villages. In Lower Egypt the pumping was largely effected by small portable steam-engines, owned by rich men, who sold the water. One such man is mentioned as deriving, according to report, an income of £15,000 a year from this source, and being, naturally enough, a fierce opponent of any scheme of improved canalisation by which the water would be made to flow spontaneously over the adjoining fields.

As a remedy for these oppressive abuses, Lord Dufferin

recommended the appointment of a thoroughly competent engineer with a large experience of irrigation works, and a staff of thoroughly trustworthy inspectors to carry out a rigid system of supervision. The duties of such an officer would be (1) to advise the Egyptian Government on the necessity, or otherwise, of new works, and on the merits of all schemes connected with the irrigation of the country which might from time to time be brought forward by European projectors; (2) to regulate the service, in conjunction with the mudirs and the Provincial Councils, so as to obtain a maximum of work with a minimum of inconvenience to the peasantry; and (3) perhaps the most important of all, to establish a system of supervision by which every complaint of unfair distribution of water, or of neglect of duty on the part of the local engineers, would be certain to reach the chief engineer, and be properly looked into in the course of a few days by one of the inspectors. A little later in this volume it will be seen from the account of the excellent work done a few years afterwards in this department by Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff and his coadjutors, how closely the tenor of these recommendations has been followed.

Another point at which Lord Dufferin penetrated to the heart of a very ancient Egyptian, and indeed Oriental, malady, indicating at once its cause and its cure, is to be found in his Report, under the heading of "Indigenous Justice." After submitting certain proposals for the reform of legal procedure, he goes on to insist on the importance of introducing a European element into the indigenous tribunals. "It seems," he says, "to be universally acknowledged, both by the Government itself and by native public opinion, that no measure short of this will ever definitely establish a spread of purity and independence among the native magistracy. Servility and corruption are so intertwined with their habits and traditions that the automatic cleansing of their courts is out of the question. But it is hoped that when once they have been rendered robust and

pure by the presence of a few high-minded Europeans, it may become possible to preserve indefinitely the standard of righteousness which shall have been thus established."

"The judges in question," continues Lord Dufferin, "will be taken from the judiciaries of Holland, Belgium, and Switzerland, except where in individual instances a knowledge of the native language and other special qualifications may render some other selection desirable. The Minister of Justice, recognising the necessity of recurring to the assistance of some European authority of high professional standing, has succeeded in securing the services of an English lawyer of great ability to co-operate with him as Procureur-Général in organising the new tribunals, and making the necessary arrangements with the European judges. There will be a Court of First Instance in every Mudirieh. Three judges will form a quorum, and one of the three will be a European. The Appeal Courts will be two in number—one for Upper and one for Lower Egypt. In these courts five judges will form a quorum, of whom two will be European and three native. The Commission, I understand, proposes that the salaries of the European judges shall be sufficiently liberal to command the services of men of high ability, and it has already taken steps to discover them." This section of the Report concludes with the statement that "the scheme is almost completed, and will probably be ready for application within the next few weeks."

Lord Dufferin's remarks on the Sudan, which, it must be remembered, neither the Egyptian nor the Indian Government at that time had any thought of abandoning, are interesting as showing how rapidly the policy of surrender developed itself in the British ministerial mind. "Some persons," wrote the British plenipotentiary,

> . . . . . are inclined to advise Egypt to withdraw altogether from the Sudan and her other acquisitions in that region; but she can hardly be expected to acquiesce in such a policy. Possessing the lower range of the Nile, she is naturally inclined to claim dominion along its entire course;

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and when it is remembered that the territories in question, if properly developed, are capable of producing inexhaustible supplies of sugar and cotton, we cannot be surprised at her unwillingness to abandon them. Unhappily, Egyptian administration in the Sudan has been almost uniformly unfortunate. The success of the present Mahdi in raising the tribes, and in extending his influence over great tracts of country, is a sufficient proof of the Government's inability either to reconcile the inhabitants to its rule or to maintain order. . . . Reinforcements to the extent of another 10,000 men have been despatched to Khartum, but they seemed to be raw, disheartened, undisciplined levies.

Then follows a passage which was to acquire a truly tragic interest in the course of the next few months :—

Colonel Hicks, a distinguished retired Indian officer, has been engaged by the Egyptian Government to join the Commander-in-Chief of the Sudan army as Chief of the Staff. A few retired European officers accompany him, who perhaps will be able to inspire the troops with confidence. Both Colonel Hicks and his companions have entered the Egyptian service on their own responsibility, nor have either Sir Edward Malet or myself been concerned in the arrangement.

Lord Dufferin's views on the resettlement of the Sudan have just now a peculiar interest, and though some of his counsels have been already fulfilled by events, one highly important recommendation with regard to military communications between Khartum and the Red Sea has yet to be adopted. The first step he urges for the improvement of the country

. . . . . is the construction of a railway from Suakin to Berber, or what perhaps would be still more advisable, to Shendy on the Nile. Another scheme of railway communication has been proposed down the Nile Valley, but it has many disadvantages. The promoters of the Suakin route maintain that the construction of their line would bring Cairo within six and a half days of Khartum, the time required to run from Suakin to Berber on the Nile being really 16 hours, and that the cost would be under a million and a half.

The question of the employment of Europeans in the Egyptian Civil Service was destined later, as we all know, to assume a somewhat invidious and contentious character. It

is, therefore, well worth while to note how it struck so clear-sighted an observer as Lord Dufferin in 1883. In the first place he disposes once for all—at any rate for that date at which he wrote—of the charge that Egypt was being exploited to provide unnecessary posts for Europeans on the look-out for official incomes. The total number of natives in the Egyptian service was at that moment, we learn, as many as 53,000, their united salaries amounting to £1,648,503; and we are assured that "if one-third of these men were dismissed to-morrow, the work of the ministries they encumber would be all the more efficiently performed." On the other hand, the number of Europeans in the service of Egypt amounted at the end of 1882 to 1054 only, of whom 140 were English, 100 Maltese (that is, under English protection), 240 French, 300 Italians, 104 Greeks, 80 Austrians, and 50 Germans. Their entire salaries came to £305,000. But although these figures show, it is true, that 2 per cent. of the total number of officials absorbed 15 per cent. of the total charges upon the Egyptian Treasury for their services, it must be remembered, Lord Dufferin observes, that more than one-half of these officials were paid either from revenues assigned to the Debt, or from the rents and profits of the Domain and Daira estates, while the tribunals of reform, in which there were a considerable number of Europeans, were supported by fees; and, in any case, the average salary of the European in Egypt does not amount to more than £285 per annum. Here, one would think, is an ample supply of reasons for letting the matter alone. But Lord Dufferin, doubtless in his conscious capacity of agent to a Liberal Government, cannot apparently refrain from retrenchment proposals, though they are conceived so much in the spirit of Mr Facing-Both-Ways that it is difficult to imagine that his heart was in them. As thus:—

> Nevertheless, it is very desirable that the European Staff should be considerably reduced, especially where it has been duplicated for political reasons. . . . On the other hand, I cannot conceive anything which

would be more fatal to the prosperity and good administration of the country than the hasty and inconsiderate extrusion of any large proportion of the Europeans in the service of the Government, in deference to the somewhat unreasonable clamour which has been raised against them. For some time European assistance in various departments of Egyptian administration will be absolutely necessary. Were they to be withdrawn, the whole machinery of Government would fall into inextricable confusion. The benefits derived from the labours of these honourable and devoted men . . . cannot be overrated. . . . It is frightful to contemplate the misery and misfortune which would be entailed on the population were the Financial, the Public Works, and analogous Departments to be left ungarrisoned by a few high-minded European officials. The Egyptian Government would quickly become a prey to dishonest speculators, ruinous contracts, and delusive engineering operations, from which they are now protected by the intelligent and capable men who are at hand to advise them in reference to these subjects . . . But apart from the material benefits conferred by the assistance of Europeans, we must remember that they are establishing a standard of integrity, zeal, and efficiency which, we may hope, will eventually be permanently consolidated in all the Departments of the State. Moreover, it may teach the native members of the Civil Service the mode in which public business should be conducted, accounts tabulated, audited, checked, and inspected, which, when it shall have become an habitual tradition, will enable the Egyptians themselves to conduct routine affairs without further guidance, until that which is now denounced as an injustice will prove to have been the best remedy for the very abuses it was accused of illustrating.

Why it should have seemed "very desirable to reduce considerably" a staff of "intelligent and capable" officials who save the whole machinery of government in Egypt from falling into inextricable confusion, who are protecting the Egyptian Government from being robbed, and who are teaching the Egyptian Civil Service the virtues of integrity, zeal, and efficiency, and training them in the proper methods of conducting public business, it is certainly not easy to understand. But this is only one of several instances in which Lord Dufferin's practical good sense and his keen eye for the realities of things appear somewhat comically at war with his decorous diplomatic recognition of the conventionally correct thing to say.

One cannot indeed take leave of this able and brilliant State paper without noting the singular combination of conflicting qualities to which it appears to testify in its author. On the one hand there is plainly discernible the genius of the experienced administrator who knows both "man" and "men," —according to the well-known antithesis supposed to have been illustrated in the contrasted characters of the two most eminent statesmen of the last half century—who has no faith in phrases, nor any respect for the high-sounding, but empty abstractions which the politicians of the closet mistake for actual factors. And, on the other hand, there is the accomplished rhetorician who, after he has put the facts of a situation in the clearest light, and stated with merciless candour the knotty problem which they raise, is content to fall back for its solution with a well-simulated complacency on the emptiest fancies of the doctrinaire. In the concluding paragraphs—the peroration, one might almost call it, of this elaborate report—the contrast and the conflict between these two tendencies come out in the most striking relief. In the former of these paragraphs he writes as follows :—

> Had I been commissioned to place affairs in Egypt on the footing of an Indian subject State, the outlook would have been different. The masterful hand of a President would have quickly bent everything to his will, and in the space of five years we should have greatly added to the material wealth of the country, by the extension of its cultivated area and the consequent expansion of its revenue, by the partial, if not the total abolition of the corvée and slavery, by the establishment of justice, and other beneficent reforms.

But then, he goes on to say, "the Egyptians would have justly considered these advantages as dearly purchased at the expense of their domestic independence;" a sentiment sure, as he knew, to be heartily approved by Radicals at home, but nevertheless quite meaningless to any who knew, as Lord Dufferin surely knew, that "the Egyptians, in the sense of a homogeneous civilised community jealous of interference with their independence,"

simply do not exist. And, moreover, he adds, "Her Majesty's Government and the public opinion have pronounced against such an alternative"—though it was plain that the views of a Government, only anxious to scuttle out of Egypt, as to the best sort of *régime* to establish there, were of no authority, and that "the public opinion of England was quite prepared, as events have since shown, to sanction any course which any Government whom they could trust should pronounce necessary to the habilitation of Egypt."

And, finally, after having shown his clear perception of what was the proper course to advise, and having offered merely inconclusive reasons for not advising it, Lord Dufferin thinks he cannot do better than wind up with a note of the Liberal doctrinaire, by reminding his readers that we have proved our "disinterestedness" by "endowing the country with representative institutions." As if it were possible to "endow" a people with representative institutions, any more than with the cardinal virtues; and as if it were not evident that the object to be achieved by us in Egypt was not to prove to the world that we were attempting to set her on her legs again in a disinterested spirit, but that the operation was possible at all! It is hardly to be wondered at that a report which showed such distinct traces, if not of two contradicting sets of opinions, at any rate of two inconsistent frames of mind, should have been somewhat sharply criticised at the time by those who knew the real facts and could measure the real difficulties of the Egyptian situation. "There were not wanting critics who, comparing his indecisive notes of warning with his general hopefulness of tone, roundly accused Lord Dufferin of writing with his tongue in his cheek, of not believing in his forecast or his own prescription." Thus writes Sir Alfred Milner, who, while admitting that this imputation was unwarranted, goes on to point out with such admirable clearness and impartiality the true character and inspiration of the Report, that in justice to its accomplished author, it may be well to quote it entire. "Up to a point," it is

admitted, his protest against the imputation of uncertainty was justified.

He was right in not despairing of the ultimate independence of Egypt; he was right in the direction which he strove to give to reforming effort. But on the other hand, he certainly glossed over the deep-rooted obstacles which his scheme of reform was bound to encounter, and above all the length of time which would be required to accomplish it. His rose-coloured picture of an Egypt "untrammelled by external importunity, though aided by sympathetic advice and assistance," of the Egyptians governing themselves on civilized principles "without an irritating and exasperating display of authority" on our part, though "under the uncompromising ægis of our friendship," was exactly suited to hit the prevailing taste, both in Egypt and Great Britain. It flattered the self-importance and the shallow Liberalism of the Pashas, always ready to sympathise with reforms, until they began to come home to them in the shape of harder work, diminished license, and fewer opportunities of self-enrichment. It was no less grateful to the British people in their honest desire to play the part of guide, philosopher, and friend to the people of Egypt, but to play it cheap. And at the same time it concealed from both parties the disagreeable side of the business: from the Egyptians, the long period of irksome control and training through which they would have to pass on their road to a civilized independence; from the English, the corresponding period of close attention to the affairs of Egypt, and the effort, anxiety, and risk which such attention involved.

Not that the recommendations of Lord Dufferin were absolutely infructuous even at the moment. During the six months of his stay a substantial beginning had been made in the reconstruction of the army. The use of the kurbash had been forbidden by law; the civil and criminal codes, which were a necessary preliminary to the establishment of reformed native tribunals, had been completed; the Khedivial Government had agreed to adopt the counsels of the Report in the important matter of irrigation, and to call in experts from India, as had been suggested, to take charge of the service. No one could have foreseen the calamities which were to bring the whole work of reform to a standstill, and to prostrate Egypt for another two years to come, first under the scourge of a devastating epidemic, and next beneath the stroke of an overwhelming military disaster. The country had to pass through the fiery trial of an invasion of cholera, which swept over the

country in June and July of 1883, with its revelations of complete collapse in the internal administration; and it had to wait patiently through the Sudanese trouble of 1884 and 1885 before its ruler or his British advisers could so much as consider the question of introducing these internal reforms which Lord Dufferin had recommended.

Then, however, although it might be impossible—and indeed, even the most optimistic among us perceived that it was impossible—to realise his magnificent programme in its entirety, it had none the less become evident to all but the most perverse of partisans that we were not entitled to treat it in every detail as a mere visionary counsel of perfection. That logic of facts, which works its way so slowly into the national mind, but whose mandates are so faithfully and fearlessly obeyed when once they are recognised, had, during the last eighteen months, been adding insensibly but unceasingly to its converts. Even those who had been most opposed to our intervention in Egypt began to feel that being "in for it" we were bound by all our reputation and traditions to make a clean job of it. Individual Englishmen, little as our foreign critics suppose it, vary immensely from each other in their respective shares of the national love of adventure and acquisition, but the one passion which unites the whole race, Conservative or Radical, Imperialist or "Little Englander," advocate of the "forward" policy or worshipper of "masterly inactivity" is the passion for administrative order. Many an Englishman who would have ignored or dared the danger of allowing Egypt to become the prize of an international scramble, shrank from the notion of abandoning her to internal confusions which our intervention would, in that case, only have made worse confounded. Could we possibly allow it to be said of us that we entered the country and put down military disorder only to leave civil anarchy behind us in its place? The question touched our English pride too nearly to allow of its receiving any but one answer from the vast majority of the nation.

Nevertheless, in 1884, our duty in Egypt was a good deal plainer than the means or even the possibility of discharging it. Before us lay the formidable task of reforming and civilising the Government of an ancient Oriental people, who for centuries had only known what it was to exchange one form of barbarous, corrupt, and oppressive rule for another; and we were entering upon it, it is hardly an exaggeration to say, with hardly a single point in our favour. As regards the European world in general, it is doubtful whether—with the possible exception of Italy—our Egyptian policy enlisted the approval and sympathy of a single great Power; nor did we in Egypt itself possess a single ally in any class of the community, save, possibly, one whose good-will was an actual source of weakness, to wit, the creditors of the impoverished fellah. Almost every other class in Egypt was against us to a man. The official caste, whether as represented by its many worthless specimens, or its few redeeming examples, looked on at our enterprise with an unfriendly, or at best a distrustful eye. The Turkish Pashas and Levantine adventurers, to whom Egypt had long been the happy hunting-ground of baksheesh, did not in the least relish the intrusion of English probity and providence into the administration of the country; while the few genuine statesmen that Egypt possessed, the half-dozen or so of competent administrators who were capable of rising to the conception of the work of government as something more than a business designed for the purpose of filling the pockets of the governors, had little cause to be satisfied with what they had so far found to be the consequences of English intervention. We had been willing enough to employ their experience and local knowledge as instruments of our policy in Egypt hitherto; but half-heartedly and irresolutely as the Government of the day were then dealing with Egyptian affairs, we cannot be said to have stood loyally by those who had served us. Again and again we had encouraged them in a line of policy which had brought

them into conflict with the European Powers; and as often as this had occurred, our Government had shrunk from giving them that effective support which alone could have enabled them to overcome the formidable opposition which they had provoked. Nor could the policy of the British Government with respect to the Sudan have failed to strike a serious blow at British prestige and authority in Egypt. Necessary as the abandonment of that portion of Egyptian territory may have seemed to be, or for the moment may have been in fact, the circumstances attending it must inevitably have produced a disastrous impression on the native mind. All that the Egyptian people could be expected to see in the events of 1884 was this: that the British Government, after having by "advice," which was equivalent to a command, induced the Khedive to surrender this large slice of his dominions to a victorious insurrection, had been unable or unwilling to assist him effectively in the work of withdrawing his garrisons and civil subjects from the abandoned territory, and had even allowed the life of their famous and devoted emissary to be sacrificed in an heroic but futile attempt to accomplish the task.

Even among the peasantry of Egypt, the fellahin of the Nile Valley, that one class for which, if for any, the intervention of England in Egyptian affairs might have been expected to appear in the light of a blessing, the English name was at that moment far from popular. For one effect of the disorder produced by the military insurrection was to afford the unfortunate cultivators a temporary relief from the incubus of their debts. The horde of Levantine money-lenders, the "gombeen men" of Egypt, had been put to flight by the confusions of the country, and their periodical exactions therefore were for a time perforce suspended. But with the defeat of Arabi, and the restoration of the reign of law and order in Egypt, this swarm of creditors had returned with whetted appetites to their prey. Demands for interest and arrears

of interest began to flow in thick and fast upon the struggling fellahin; and from these demands, of course, the British authorities in Egypt could not, even if they would, have protected them. For with the suppression of the military rebellion the authority of the Mixed Courts was restored, and these tribunals, of course, insisted on the payment in full of the peasants' debts. Profound, then, as was the discontent of the official classes, it was not deeper, while from the greater ease of their position, it was less vehement and acute, than the dissatisfaction of the fellahin.

Such being the disposition of officialism and of industry towards the highest *régime*, the mood of commerce was not one whit more favourable. Even the traders of Alexandria, for instance, much as they owed the Power which had put down disorder and re-established the authority of law and the security of property were little better affected to our rule. They had, to be sure, their special and legitimate grievances in the delay of the payment of the indemnities for the damages caused by the bombardment of the port and the destruction by fire to which it led; but the principal, though the less reasonable, source of their discontent was the continued depression of trade. They had built upon the illusory imagination that the mere planting of the British flag in Egypt would instantaneously and powerfully stimulate commercial enterprise, and cause an immediate influx of capital into the country. To some extent, of course, they had only themselves to blame for the disappointment of their premature anticipation. It was not to be expected that capital, with its proverbial timidity, would at once commit itself to the keeping of a country which had been the scene of such severe convulsions as had recently shaken Egypt; but in some measure also they had cause of complaint against the vacillations of a Power whose intentions, whether of continued occupation or of more or less sudden departure, seemed to the outside observer to vary almost from month to month, and the mere uncertainty of which was in itself sufficient to impel the intending investor

of capital in Egypt to hold his hand. But without attempting any new apportionment of parts between reasonable and unreasonable grounds of discontent among the commercial classes in Egypt, the fact remains that their dissatisfaction was extreme, and that it added a third element of difficulty to the task which we had set ourselves. In short, it may be said without exaggeration, that while at no time since the deposition of Ismail Pasha had England been confronted with a more difficult situation in Egypt, or one requiring greater influence and authority to enable her to deal with it, yet at no time probably during that period did her credit stand lower than in the years 1884 and 1885.

It was truly fortunate that at that crisis in the history of our Egyptian policy we were able to command the services of that great diplomatist and administrator whose name will be as inseparably associated with the reform of the Government of Egypt and the revival of her prosperity, as will be those of Wolseley and Kitchener with the rescue of the country from military anarchy, and of the outlying provinces from fanatical barbarism. Lord Cromer, then Sir Evelyn Baring, returned to Cairo in 1883, with the reputation which he had won for years previously as a financier enhanced by a three years' management of the revenues of India; but he had yet to display that genius for administration and those great powers as a diplomatist which the events of the next decade were to call forth. Of all the great reforms which in the course of that period were to convert Egypt from a land of official malfeasance, of fiscal oppression, and of judicial corruption into a country which, as regards government taxation and the administration will bear comparison with British India, Sir Evelyn Baring was the life and soul. The band of able officials who served under him were informed by his experience, and drew inspiration from his example. In every department of the public service which they purified and vitalized his influence was felt; his advice was always accessible; his support in their encounters

with native opposition was never wanting; and there is not one of them from the highest to the lowest who, whatever they may have been able to achieve by their personal exertions, would not unreservedly admit that the British Consul-General has from the first been the leading spirit in the work.'

His first pre-occupations in his official capacity were naturally with Egyptian finance, and in the course of the year 1884, and until the spring of 1885, he was busied, in conjunction with other financial experts, in an inquiry into the resources and liabilities of Egypt, which after much international negotiation resulted in the spring of the latter year in the resettlement of matters by, among other measures, the raising of a loan of nine millions sterling. It was this transaction which gave him the first opportunity of showing that he was something more than a mere financier, and that the spirit of a courageous and far-seeing administrator was no less conspicuous than that of a skilled manipulator. His application of the ninth million to expenditure on the irrigation was a bold stroke of administrative policy which may fairly be said to have laid the basis of the subsequent prosperity. It is impossible here to refrain from quoting Sir Alfred Milner's brilliant analysis of the achievement:—

The history of that million is one of the most marvellous chapters even in the romantic history of Egyptian finance. The old saw recommends "a hair of the dog that bit you." The million in question was to all appearance a remedy quite as illogical. That a country which had been ruined by excessive expenditure and reckless borrowing should borrow once more in the very moment of insolvency, and should do so not merely to clear off existing liabilities, but actually to plunge into fresh expenditure, seemed contrary to every maxim of financial prudence. There were not wanting critics of the highest repute who were vehemently hostile to the proposed new outlay. And in principle they were entirely right. Not in one case out of a hundred would such a policy have been justifiable. But Egypt, the land of exceptions, supplied just that hundredth case. It was life or death to her to put the great central works, upon which the irrigation of the Delta depended, into proper working order. To do so required a capital expenditure which was beyond the means of the annual Budget of the Public Works Ministry. This extra million just provided the necessary

capital. It saved the irrigation system, and with it the finances of Egypt. It has brought in cent. per cent. Of all the extraordinary contrasts of which the history, and especially the financial history, of Egypt is so full, there is none more striking than that of the countless millions borrowed by Ismail and this single million for irrigation; the former raised with ease in the heyday of fortune, the latter only obtained after a hard struggle when Egypt's power of borrowing seemed almost extinct; the former squandered with so little benefit to the country, the latter of such incalculable value in the re-establishment of her prosperity.

A few words, however, must here be devoted to the general subject of that financial settlement on which Sir Evelyn Baring had the courage and foresight to engraft this large item of expenditure. For some years prior to 1884 it had become apparent that the finances of Egypt must again be taken in hand by the Powers. The country had to meet the heavy liability of the Alexandrian indemnity, as well as to clear off the debts more directly due to the rebellion and to the war in the Sudan; and the difficulty which it experienced in raising the funds necessary for these purposes was seriously aggravated by the fact that an undue proportion of its revenues was locked up, so to speak, as security for the payment of the interest on its Debt. By the year 1883 the result of this excessive hypothecation had reached a point of positive absurdity, for while the revenues assigned to the service of the Debt yielded so large a surplus that after full payment of the interest it was found possible to redeem £800,000, the revenues applicable to the purposes of administration fell largely short of the expenditure, and to cover the deficit Egypt was obliged to raise short loans at high rates, while at the same time she was paying off debts bearing no higher interest than four or five per cent.

Intolerable, however, as was the situation, it was impossible for the Egyptian Government to extricate the country from it by their own mere motion. Rates of interest and assignments of revenue had alike been fixed by the Law of Liquidation, which could not be modified without the consent of the

Great Powers; while to raise a new loan required not only their consent, but also the concurrence of Turkey. As a first step to procuring this combined agreement, the British Government appointed a Committee, consisting of Sir Evelyn Baring, Sir Rivers Wilson, Sir Reginald Welby, and Sir James Carmichael, to examine and report upon the finances of Egypt. The inquiry, which commenced towards the end of April, extended over several weeks, and the report of the Committee, which was presented on the 23rd June, was to this effect:—

The total expenditure of Egypt was estimated by the Committee at £4,667,000 for administrative purposes, and at £3,920,000 for the service of the Debt, giving a total of £8,587,000. The revenue of the country was calculated at £8,855,000, thus showing an apparent surplus of £268,000. To their expenditure, however, the Committee proposed to add the amount of interest and sinking fund on a loan of £8,000,000 to be raised, with the permission of the Powers, for the payment of the Alexandrian indemnities, for the extinction of the floating debt, and for defraying the cost of the army of occupation. By these additions the expenditure would be raised to the sum of £9,231,000, which would, of course, have converted the surplus into a deficit of £376,000.

It was not for the Committee—so at least they appear to have thought—to suggest what measures should be taken to restore the financial equilibrium. But they drew the attention of the Government to certain points, among the most important of which was the fact that they had made no distinction in their estimate between assigned and non-assigned revenues, inasmuch as they had "assumed," that the surplus or the assigned revenues will be devoted to administrative expenditure, and not to the purchase of "Unified Stock in the market," or, in other words, to the redemption of debt. Their report was discussed in detail by a conference of the Powers which

assembled in London in the early autumn of the same year; but met as it was by a counter-proposal from M. de Blignières who had been the representative of France in the days of the Dual Control, it was hardly likely to be unanimously adopted, and the Conference broke up without coming to any agreement.

The question dragged on unsettled to the close of the year, the embarrassment of the Egyptian Government becoming meanwhile more and more severe, and amounting to a positive difficulty in paying their administrative way. In the middle of January 1885, however, France submitted a series of counter-proposals which opened the way for fresh negotiations. The new French scheme was based, as was that of M. de Blignières, on the assumption that the revenues of Egypt were sufficient to cover the normal expenditure, and the appointment of another Commission of Inquiry to investigate the matter was suggested. As this, however, was opposed by our own Government on the ground of the delay which it would occasion, France expressed her willingness to assent to a tax of 5 per cent. on the coupons of all the debts, to be repaid if the revenues were found sufficient. The French Government also proposed that the new loan should be one of nine instead of eight millions, and should be secured by the collective guarantee of the Powers, the amount required for the service of the Debt being at the same time made a first charge on the Egyptian revenues. And after some weeks of further negotiation, a Convention, framed substantially on the basis of these proposals, was signed by the representatives of the six great Powers and Turkey on the 18th March, 1885. It made the urgently required provision for the application of surplus revenue to the expenses of administration; and for the payment of the Alexandrian indemnities and other purposes it sanctioned the raising of a loan of nine millions sterling. It was this ninth million that Sir Evelyn Baring was able to divert as above described to the infinitely beneficent work of irrigation.

## CHAPTER VIII

### OUR WORK IN THE LAND

"THE NILE," it has been said, "is Egypt," and this, if we consider it, is the same thing as saying that irrigation and prosperity are convertible terms. Hence the importance of that spirited and indeed daring contribution made by Sir Evelyn Baring from the finances of a deeply embarrassed state to this vital Egyptian interest. Its inestimable value is proved by the simple fact that without it the Irrigation Department would not have been able to carry out the greatest and most potently effective of its measures—the restoration and development of the barrage constructed in 1842 just below the apex of the Delta by an able French engineer, Mouget Bey, under the direction of that "barbarian of genius," as Sir Alfred Milner well calls him, Mehemet Ali. This imposing dam took nearly twenty years, and cost not far from two millions sterling, to construct; but it had fallen by this time into a state of hopeless disrepair, and the Egyptian Government, instead of devoting money to its restoration, were actually about to enter into a most costly contract for pumping water out of the river into the irrigation canals. In other words they were preparing to spend a large sum of money on an attempt to utilise a portion of their natural water-supply, instead of endeavouring by more provident expenditure to save the whole. This contract, however, under the advice of Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, the skilled and energetic head of the Irrigation Department, had been laid aside, and for two years in succession an attempt was made to see how much water the barrage could hold up if the arches

of the bridges spanning the Rosetta and Damietta branches of the Nile were closed up. The enterprise proved signally successful, and water in abundance made its appearance in the canals as late as the middle of June, where it had not been seen for years except in flood time.

The engineers, therefore, were now able to make a very powerful appeal for a special grant to carry out the complete repair of the barrage; but the sum required was quite beyond the resources of the annual Budget of their Department, and but for the "irrigation million" it could not have been obtained. Out of this fund, however, it was possible to provide it, and the work of reconstruction was at once put in hand. It was one of enormous difficulty, not only in consequence of the loose and treacherous nature of the river-bed, but by reason of the necessity of keeping the barrage in use during all the period of its repair, in order to keep the waters of the Nile at such a level during the summer as would enable it to suffice for the annual needs of the cultivators. It was thus necessary to isolate those portions of its works which were under treatment, while the remainder of it continued to hold up the river. Every year, as soon as the flood was over, one half of the bridges was enclosed by a coffer-dam out of which all the water was pumped, so that the flooring of the arches was left dry. An enormous number of labourers were employed, and the task of repairing the floor and strengthening and extending the mass of masonry which constitutes the defence of the structure against the action of the water, proceeded without a day's cessation, and for a great part of the time by night as well as by day. Working at this pressure, and in face of these immense difficulties, the western half of the Rosetta branch was finished in the winter and spring of 1886–7, and the eastern half in 1888–1889. The eastern half of the Damietta branch was similarly completed in 1887–8, and the western half in 1889–90. The cost of the work was £460,000, and the annual expense of maintaining it is estimated at £30,000. Had the rescinded

pumping contract been carried out, the initial expenditure would have been £700,000, and the annual cost of maintenance, £250,000. The balance of the "irrigation million" was devoted to making the third or eastern of the three main canals taking off from the barrage, to certain improvements in navigation, and to drainage. Emboldened by the signal success which had attended the outlay, the Department appealed for a second special grant of £1,250,000 for the improvement of irrigation in Upper Egypt. The sum actually obtained was £900,000, and it was applied to the purpose in question.

The next thing was to reform the system of control, and here it is worth while to note how thoroughly the experienced Anglo-Indian engineers who were called in by the Khedive to supervise the system concurred in opinion with Lord Dufferin. The country was parcelled out into districts under Inspectors of Irrigation, each of whom was entrusted with considerable and practically independent authority, and was empowered to take immediate action to correct any unfairness or inequality in the distribution of authority. So ample were their attributions that they became a cause of difference between the Egyptian Prime Minister and his British advisers. Nubar Pasha, brought up as he had been under the influence of French administrative principles and the French spirit of centralisation, looked with disfavour on the large executive powers confided to the English Inspectors of Irrigation. He was desirous of limiting them, and pressed for their limitation. No concessions, however, were to be obtained on this point from the distinguished Anglo-Indian official who had been placed at the head of the irrigation service. Sir Colin Scott Moncrieff, trained under a system which is the exact antithesis of the French, and which relies for its efficiency on the extent of the administrative power committed to local officials, saw clearly that unless the irrigation inspectors were authorised to act at once for his protection, and remained firm, the fellah would not get his due share of water at all; and not a little

friction between the Egyptian Prime Minister and the British agency was the result.

This, however, was only one, and not the most serious, of the conflicts in which the British reconstructors of the Government of Egypt became embroiled with the ablest of Egyptian statesmen. But in truth it might even from the first have been foreseen that Nubar Pasha was unsuited to the part which he was called upon to play under the somewhat anomalous *régime* created by our informal Protectorate over the country in which he had hitherto occupied so important a place. A commander-in-chief does not usually make a good general-of-division, and this was practically the change of posts to which Nubar, if he was to work harmoniously with the British Consul-General, would have had to reconcile himself. If he had "seen eye to eye" with Lord Cromer in all the greater matters of finance and administration, minor differences might, no doubt, have been composed. But such similarity of view was, of course, not to be expected. With all his ability and all his considerable share of Western enlightenment, Nubar after all was an Oriental, with all the Oriental's inability to appreciate what may be called the professional scruples of the Western financier, and all the Oriental's impatience of the Western administrator's methods.

Thus, for instance, while to men like Baring and Sir Edgar Vincent, the then financial adviser of the Egyptian Government, the rehabilitation of the solvency of Egypt was a paramount consideration, and the duty of keeping faith with the public creditor an object to which all others must be postponed, it was impossible for a man of Nubar's race, temperament, and training to assign their proper order of precedence to these interests. Vincent was persuaded that, by the practice of a sufficiently rigid economy, Egypt could be made to pay her way on the basis provided by the Convention of London. Nubar on the contrary was convinced that this was impossible; that at the close of the two years' experimental period Egypt would again have to file,

so to speak, another petition in bankruptcy in the Court of the European Powers, and to plead for a revision of the terms of their former decree. Hence, naturally, he thought himself justified in opposing economies which, while they necessarily retarded the progress of reforms recognised as desirable alike by himself and his British colleague, must eventually fail to stave off the financial collapse which he regarded as inevitable. Thus the sacrifices which our rigidly economical policy compelled us to demand of the Egyptian Prime Minister became at last intolerably irksome to him. He resented being compelled to refuse the money for which, in the name of efficiency and improvement, the different departments were clamouring. He had the Oriental magnate's contempt for small savings, and his toleration for little jobs; and, for a less disinterested motive, he was especially desirous of effecting an immediate reduction of the land-tax; not solely, it is to be feared, for the reason that it pressed heavily upon the fellah, but because it considerably reduced the income of his own, the land-owning, class.

The British Financial Adviser was, of course, supported by the British Consul-General, and Nubar found himself in course of time committed to a position of uncompromising hostility to both. In the year 1887 the conflict reached a critical stage, and the Egyptian Minister had recourse to a manœuvre which —not unnaturally perhaps—he regarded as likely to secure his victory over his opponents, but which was in reality more calculated than any other to insure his own defeat. He attempted to go behind the back of Her Majesty's representative in Egypt, and to counterwork his policy through the instrumentality of Her Majesty's Ministers at home. Possibly he may have hoped something from the recent change of Government in the country. Baring's appointment, it may have occurred to him, was a Gladstonian one, and a Unionist Government, which the year before had been returned to power with an overwhelming majority, might welcome a plausible opportunity of displacing him. Such a calculation would not

be unlikely to commend itself to an Oriental politician partially, but not thoroughly, acquainted with the English party system, and therefore unaware that there is still one department of our policy which English statesmen—and especially English Conservative statesmen—have always striven to exclude from the sphere of its pernicious influence. He could not have been expected to realise the strength of the obligation incumbent upon any high-minded and patriotic English Minister to give loyal support to any public servant of the Crown, by whatever Government appointed, who has faithfully and ably represented the nation and upheld the national interests abroad. Great, therefore, no doubt, was his surprise and disappointment at finding that the complaints made by him in Downing Street fell upon unsympathetic ears, and that Lord Salisbury could hold out no hope to him that the Unionist Government would depart one hair's breadth from the line of policy marked out by a preceding Administration in Lord Granville's memorable despatch. He returned to Cairo empty-handed, and at last, it may be supposed, in full possession of the important truth, that as the British Consul-General was behind the British Financial Adviser, so the British Government were behind the Consul-General.

It was too late for him, however—if indeed it were possible for a man of his character and antecedents—to adopt a more yielding attitude, and early in the following year the final rupture came about in connection with another important article in the catalogue of British reform, the reorganisation of the Egyptian police.

The death of Baker Pasha had created a vacancy in the office of Chief of the Police, and Nubar seized the opportunity of proposing such a change in the organisation of the force as would enable him to get rid of its English officers. He proposed to restore the abolished authority of the *mudirs* over this force, and to do away with the central office at Cairo. This retrograde step, however, met with the most strenuous

resistance from the British Consul-General, who rightly insisted that whatever other changes might be introduced into the organisation of the police, an Englishman should again be appointed to the chief command.

Again Nubar had to look about him for support, and having proved the futility of appealing to the British Government against their representative, he turned to Tewfik himself. The moment, he thought, was a propitious one, for the intrigues of Ismail Pasha at Constantinople were just then causing much alarm and uneasiness to the Khedive, and rendered the services of his astute Minister of special value to him at that critical juncture. Tewfik was accordingly assured by Nubar that, if only the Egyptian Government took up a sufficiently firm attitude in the matter, the British Government would yield to their protests, and disavow the action of its agent. Concurrently with this assurance a special emissary was despatched to London to make express complaint of Baring's conduct, as tending to reduce the Khedive to a nonentity, and to render British influence unpopular in Egypt.

The manœuvre failed as completely as the former one. The British Government knew its able and tactful agent at Cairo too well to suspect him of wanton and arbitrary interference in Egyptian affairs. They felt sure that if he saw fit to insist on British management of the police, it was with good grounds; and disregarding the complaint thus made to them, they caused a strong hint to be conveyed to the Khedive that if he expected England to support him against external enemies, he must be content to take English advice on questions of internal policy. Tewfik at once perceived that in siding with his Minister he would be incurring the very danger from which he had looked to that Minister to protect him. He gave way, and the question of the command of the police was settled without further delay in accordance with the English Consul-General's views.

The result of this struggle decided much more, of course, than the particular question out of which it arose. It constituted if not the first, at any rate the most significant and conspicuous application of Lord Granville's principle, namely, that in all important matters the advice of the British Government was to be followed, and that any Egyptian Minister who did not see his way to doing so must cease to hold office. And that this principle should have been affirmed and acted upon in the person of the best known and most experienced of Egyptian statesmen was, of course, a circumstance which could not fail to impress itself on the Oriental mind, which respects nothing in the world so profoundly as the demonstration of irresistible power. Nubar's official life was not, indeed, immediately brought to a close by this defeat, but his authority was wounded to the death. Though he continued to hold office for yet another year, he never recovered his Ministerial prestige; and in June 1888, on some minor and now forgotten question, the Khedive dismissed him. His successor, Riaz Pasha, was destined, as will appear in the sequel, to repeat the experience of his predecessor with singular fidelity; but for the moment at any rate the lesson of Nubar's dismissal was taken to heart. It proved beyond possibility of doubt that a new spirit had entered into our management of Egyptian affairs since the old irresolute day of 1883-84, and that England, having now set her hand firmly to the task of reform in Egypt, was determined that neither Khedive nor Minister should thwart her policy until that task was accomplished.

With the settlement of the Egyptian finances, the reform of the system of taxation, and the reorganisation of the police, there remained only one other, but that in some respects the most arduous and complete portion of our work in Egypt to be performed—the reconstruction of the judicial tribunals. To Nubar Pasha as the creator of the Mixed Tribunals the task of supervising the native courts had been

originally, and no doubt properly, deputed; and during the earlier and more troubled period of the British occupation it would have been difficult, not to say ungracious, to revoke the trust. Accordingly, he retained for some three years the almost undivided control of the Egyptian judiciary; but the result of his supervision had been on the whole unsatisfactory, and at the moment of his fall the failure of the native system of judicature was not only a matter of general notoriety to the whole European community, but was recognised even by the native population themselves. The courts were manned from top to bottom with his nominees, and when complaints of the corruption and incapacity of the judges became general, when nothing was heard on all hands but criticisms of the cumbrous procedure of the courts, of the expense and delay of litigation, and of the doubtful nature of the result, it was naturally upon Nubar Pasha that the blame was laid.

Not only, however, was he held accountable for the impurity and inefficiency of the native administration of justice, but a new and still heavier responsibility was brought home to him after his dismissal in respect of the proceedings of certain provisional tribunals appointed by him with a view of relieving the pressure upon the regular courts. These tribunals, the so-called "Commissions of Brigandage," had been originally appointed for a few months only, but their powers had been extended by successive decrees until at last they had acquired jurisdiction over the great mass of criminal offences, alike in Upper and Lower Egypt. They were not, indeed, without an infusion of the judicial element, but substantially they were mere administrative tribunals of the Oriental type, presided over by a *mudir*, and placed under the control, not of any supreme judicial authority, but—in flagrant defiance of Western principles—of a department of the executive, the Ministry of the Interior. In October 1887 M. Legrelle, a Belgian, was appointed Procureur-Général, and commissioned to hold an inquiry into existing abuses. In

1888, the year of Nubar's dismissal, his investigations bore fruit in a highly damaging Report, in which the irregularities, the injustice, and the cruelties of these tribunals were brought startlingly to light. It was discovered that they had freely employed torture for the purpose of obtaining evidence, that many persons had been imprisoned for years without trial, and that many others had been condemned to suffer punishment on the weakest evidence. In one case, nineteen people, all innocent, had been condemned on the testimony of a single man, who, as it turned out, had been coerced into falsely accusing himself and his associates.

The first thing to be done, of course, was to sweep these pseudo-tribunals away, and Nubar's successor, Riaz Pasha, was with some difficulty prevailed upon, by the urgent representation of Sir Evelyn Baring, to consent to their suppression in 1889. But to replace was less easy than to destroy; for the Egyptian judicial system was one of a singularly heterogeneous and complicated character. In reality it was not one system, but four. At the date of our reforms, Egypt was served by (1) the Mehkemes or Courts of the Religious Law, administering a jurisprudence laid down for them in the Koran, and exercising jurisdiction solely or mainly over the Mohammedan community; (2) the Mixed Tribunals, which had cognizance of civil causes between foreigners of different nationalities, or between foreigners and natives, with a certain limited jurisdiction over criminal offences committed by foreigners; (3) the Consular Courts, to which alone the great majority of criminal offenders of foreign nationalities were amenable, and lastly (4), the Native Courts, which dealt with civil actions between, and with crimes committed by natives.

It was with the last-named tribunals that the English reform was in a position to deal. With the Religious Courts it was felt to be unadvisable for Christians to meddle. To modify the constitution or procedure of the Mixed Courts

required the unanimous assent of the fourteen Powers by which they were established. The privileges of the Consular Courts were guarded with natural jealousy by the various European States, which were respectively represented by them for the protection of their subjects, and the functions of these tribunals, unsatisfactory as in many respects they are, could hardly be limited save by extending the jurisdiction of the Mixed Courts, or by so improving the quality of the article supplied under the name of justice by the Native Courts as to make it possible to unite and subject, to say nothing of compelling, European suitors to submit themselves and their cases to them.

Precluded, then, from dealing with any but these last-named and not very accurately styled "judicial bodies," it became necessary to consider what were the changes required to place them in a condition of efficiency. Their two most flagrant defects were costliness and complexity of procedure, and of these the former was, if possible, the more conspicuous of the two. The numerical strength of the judication had been fixed absurdly high at a moment when the condition of the finances was alarmingly low. Hence the scale of the judicial salaries, having to be adapted to the condition, had been so regulated as to expose native judges even when competent to the strongest temptation to become corrupt. As a matter of fact, however, their competency was far from uniform; there was not, indeed, in the whole of Egypt a sufficient supply of that indispensable commodity to "go round." The country had been called upon to man eight tribunals of first instance with a staff of a dozen judges each, and a Court of Appeal with one of nearly double that strength; and to suppose that a mixed Oriental community like that of Egypt could produce some six score of trained lawyers on demand was a patent absurdity. As a matter of fact it could not, and did not yield more than a quarter of that number, and the actual supply of properly qualified judges fell short by something like seventy-five per

cent. Of the first occupants of the Native Bench, only about one in four had had a regular legal training, and even of these a considerable number were lawyers whose only credentials were the degrees of some university less solicitous for the proficiency of its graduates than for the accumulation of their fees.

It is possible that under a system administered by Western methods a somewhat higher average of fitness might have been secured. But we had hitherto left the patronage attached to the administration of justice in the uncontrolled hands of native officials, and with the natural and inevitable result. The idea of special qualification as a necessary condition of the efficient discharge of special duties is of comparatively recent growth even in the West. To the Eastern mind it is wholly unfamiliar; and hence, when the Native Courts were first constituted, the judicial appointments were regarded by those who had the right of nominating to them as simply so many opportunities for providing a certain number of no doubt generally deserving, but specifically quite unqualified people with a modest income.

The first step towards the restoration of judicial efficiency to these tribunals was, in the opinion of the Consul-General, to strengthen them by an increased admixture of European judges. This, however, as might be expected, aroused the energetic opposition of Riaz Pasha, and it needed all Sir Evelyn Baring's firmness and perseverance to obtain his assent to the appointment of two additional English members of the Native Court of Appeal, making in all three Englishmen and three Belgians among the judges having seats on that tribunal. On its becoming evident, moreover, that some more radical reform than this was needed, the British representative strongly urged the temporary appointment of an eminent Indian judge to examine the whole system of native jurisprudence and to formulate a scheme for its amendment. Here again he carried his point, and in the spring of 1890

Mr (now Sir John) Scott, a judge of the High Court of Bombay, came to Egypt to advise on the question, the appointment being in the first instance limited to one year.

At the end of 1890 Mr Scott reported, and his Report had convulsive effects, for it brought Riaz Pasha to the end of his concession, and precipitated a fresh conflict between an Egyptian Prime Minister and the agent of the protecting Power. Mr Scott had recommended a number of important changes in the constitution of the courts, insisting especially on a great improvement in their standard of judicial competency In this proposal Riaz correctly enough foresaw a large displacement of the nominees of his predecessor, and now assumed an attitude of uncompromising resistance. He inspired the Minister of Justice to draft a memorandum condemning Mr Scott's recommendations from beginning to end. The challenge thus thrown down to the British Consul-General was promptly taken up, and, acting under instructions from home, Sir Evelyn Baring pressed more energetically than ever for the adoption of Mr Scott's scheme, and for the appointment of its author to superintend its execution. Riaz at once resorted to Nubar's game, and endeavoured to obtain the support of the Khedive in his resistance. Tewfik Pasha, however, had had enough of trying to play off his own personality against the influence of the Consul-General in Downing Street, and foreseeing the inevitable result of any such attempt to back up a recalcitrant Minister, declined the contest. Mr Scott's recommendations were accepted, and he himself appointed to a permanent post, while Riaz paid the penalty of his rash adoption of the tactics of his predecessor by following him into retirement. His defeat was ultimately fatal. The relations between him and the ruler who had shrunk from supporting him became, not unnaturally, strained, and in May 1891 he resigned his office on the plea of ill-health.

This obstacle removed, the proposed reforms were at once

put in hand. No attempt was made, and very wisely, to remodel the existing system of jurisprudence, or to substitute those simpler methods of adjudication which in India have proved so well suited to the requirements of humble litigants and the trial of what are, in most instances, petty and "plain sailing" causes. Egypt already possessed a code and a procedure of her own; the native judges knew how to work with them, and with no other; and the people were accustomed to them. All that was wanted was to cheapen processes which had hitherto been costly, and to enable the judges to earn that praise for being "swift of despatch and easy of access" which even the savagely hostile Dryden was obliged to concede to the Chancellorship of "Achitophel" Shaftesbury. To insure these last-mentioned merits, the number of judges which once formed the quorum in a multitude of civil and criminal cases was reduced, and the summary jurisdiction of the Courts extended. Courts formerly composed of five judges were empowered to act with three only, while instead of there being only one judge of summary jurisdiction attached to each tribunal, twenty were employed throughout the country; and thus Courts were made ambulatory instead of stationary, so that petty suits and offences might be dealt with on the spot. These judges were given cognizance of all offences not exceeding the gravity of misdemeanours, and of all civil actions not involving a sum of more than £100. The general effect of these changes was to expedite the action of the law, to economise the time of the judges and the money of the suitors, and to reserve the full strength of the highest Court for really important questions.

A part of the British work in Egypt which, from one point of view, should have had the first place in this recital has been reserved to the last. I refer to the reconstruction of the Egyptian army. It is not, indeed, the first in the sense of being the highest service which could be rendered to an Oriental people by a civilising and protecting Power. There

are countries to which the restoration of domestic order, the regularisation of finance, and the purification of justice, would be the highest service that could be rendered. But the case of any such countries presupposes a reasonable amount of natural security against foreign enemies, and Egypt is not, and never has been, secure against this source of danger. Her physical defencelessness, coupled with the unwarlike character of her inhabitants, is at the root of all her history; and as the former element of weakness cannot be corrected by man, the first of all needs is the correction of the latter. In 1883 it seemed almost a hopeless task. The worthlessness of the Egyptian soldier had been pretty conclusively proved in the desert of Kordofan at the expense of Hicks Pasha, and whatever had been wanting to the complete proof was demonstrated at Tel-el-Kebir. "The Egyptian army is disbanded," was the pronouncement of a laconic Khedivial decree of December 1882; and the problem to be solved was, what was to take its place? Very few people at that date had the courage to advise that an attempt should be made to construct a new Egyptian army out of the same materials as the old one; but among those few was Lord Dufferin. It is again to the credit of his much-criticised Report that in this respect also he indicated the course which was ultimately adopted and triumphantly carried out. In the face of a host of fantastic suggestions—of Turkish battalions, of mixed European battalions, and what not—he adhered firmly to the principle of entrusting the country to its own inhabitants; and there were found British officers ready to adopt it, and confident that they could apply it with success. They began by improving the condition of the native recruit; they saw that he was regularly paid; that he was protected from ill-treatment by the native officers; that he was properly fed and housed in barracks; that faith was kept with him as regards length of service and allowance of linen; that he was looked after when ill; that he was properly drilled and instructed in his duties. A trial was made of the new

recruits as early as 1884, when the then Sirdar, Sir Evelyn Wood, obtained permission to send a contingent of them to the Gordon Relief Expedition. Here they were principally engaged in guarding the long line of communications which extended from Assiut to Korti, and in the arduous work of transport, where boats containing men and stores had to be dragged for miles against a strong current or through dangerous rapids, they showed all their best qualities of zeal, obedience, and endurance. Moreover, small detachments of them were actually under fire at Abu Klea and elsewhere, and behaved with a steadiness which justified the opinion of those who believed, as did their commander, that they might safely have been intrusted with a larger share of the actual fighting.

It soon, however, became evident that their numbers must be added to. As time wore on, and Mahdism in the south increased in strength and menace, Lord Dufferin's suggested maximum of 6000 was seen to be inadequate. Yet at the end of 1883 the infantry still consisted of only eight battalions, recruited exclusively from the fellahin. In May 1884 the military authorities raised a 9th battalion at Suakin, the first of the famous black regiments which have since done such brilliant work. The experiment of enlisting these born fighters, many of whom would have taken service with the Khalifa if they had not been secured for the Khedive, proved so successful that in January 1886 another battalion, the 10th Sudanese, was also raised. In June of the same year the 13th Sudanese was added, in December 1887, the 11th, and, finally, in November 1888, the 12th. They are born fighters—which the Egyptian fellah never was—and as such it was, no doubt, intended when they were enrolled that they should bear the brunt of the fighting. But as subsequent experience was to show, they have not had to bear the brunt of it alone. The despised fellah of 1883 was to be taught to play his part in battle like a man, and he and his comrades have become worthy to take their stand beside the soldiers of the western world.

This closes the record of our constructive work in Egypt, and undoubtedly it is a record of which our country and our race have good reason to be proud. Never, probably, has it fallen to the lot of any nation to rescue a whole people so speedily from the depths of oppression and misgovernment in which for long ages they had been plunged, or to set their feet so firmly, and to lead their steps so far on the path of civilisation. When we entered the country it presented many of the worst features of an Oriental despotism, aggravated rather than mitigated by those borrowings from Western methods of government and administration which had been engrafted on its system in the interest of anybody rather than the natives of the soil. These unfortunates, the heirs to centuries of extortion and persecution, were suffering dumbly under that reduplication of those evils which result in most Eastern countries from the financial embarrassments of monarchs. Their taxes were wrung from them at the arbitrary will of the collector, at irregular intervals, with illegal frequency, and often by the use of torture. That primary condition of success in the fellah's industry—his share of the Nile water—was in continual jeopardy from the defects of the irrigation system and the diversions of the supply by his richer and more powerful neighbour. The guardianship of his life and property was in the hands of an inadequate and ill-disciplined police; the maintenance of his legal rights was at the mercy of corrupt and incompetent tribunals, and the protection of his country against attacks from its savage neighbours of the desert was committed to a spiritless and ill-trained army, into whose ranks he was liable himself to be driven as an unwilling recruit, under the lash of his conscription.

Within two years after the commencement of the British occupation a beginning had already been made in the correction of these grievous abuses: before five years had passed, the worst of them were in process of removal: long before the end of the decade the last of them had been swept away. The

finances of the country had been reduced to permanent order; the sources of its industrial wealth had been invigorated by the happily bold expenditure of the irrigation million, and its resulting benefits were being distributed with all the stern rigidity of British justice, among large and small cultivators alike. The cruel extortions of the tax-collector had been suppressed, and the whole fiscal system of Egypt had been regularised and simplified, made humane and equitable; her police had been reorganised and redisciplined; her army had been pushed far forward on the road of improvement, and was steadily developing into a trustworthy instrument of national defence. Last, and perhaps greatest feat of all, the fount and stream of justice had for the Egyptian peasant been purified of its pollutions, and the British Consul-General and his able coadjutors were justified in claiming some share for themselves of the noble praise awarded to that great legal reformer in our own country, of whom it was said that he had "found law dear, and left it cheap; found it the privilege of the rich, left it the patrimony of the poor; found it the two-edged sword of fraud and oppression, left it the staff of honesty and the shield of innocence."

And the whole of this great and beneficent work, of which Lord Cromer, as has been said, was from first to last the guiding spirit, was achieved by us in the teeth of constantly recurring obstacles, and under the shadow of continual discouragements. It was achieved without assistance from any of those European Powers who should have sympathised with us in the name of our common civilisation, but amid the indifference of all, and against the covert or overt opposition of some. It was wrought through unwilling native instruments, and encountered impediments of native prejudice and native interest at every stage. And it was only carried through at the cost of two Ministerial resignations, and of the temporary loss of the services of two out of the few Egyptian politicians who could lay any claim to the quality of statesmanship.

Whether, in short, we look at the dimensions of the task which we have accomplished in Egypt, or at the multitude and magnitude of the difficulties which had to be overcome in its accomplishment, we are surely entitled to reckon it as one of the most notable exploits in the whole history of civilisation.

## CHAPTER IX

### ABBAS, AND THE LOOM OF WAR

THE succession of Abbas Pasha was the commencement of a period of some anxiety for the British Government and their Agent in Egypt. Even in Western States, and under the vigorous restraint which long traditions and fixed conventions impose upon the caprice and even the individuality of their rulers, the behaviour of a youth of eighteen lifted suddenly to the throne must always be a more or less indeterminate factor in affairs. More obvious still is the truth in the case of an Oriental sovereignty, and most emphatically of all does it hold good in relation to Egypt, the fortunes of whose successive satraps, from Mehemet Ali, have varied so widely from each other, yet in such direct relation to the differences of their individual character. That of Abbas, of course, was unknown, and from his age might even be set down as unformed; but this only rendered it more doubtful whether he would be able to play his difficult part with success. Even if his temperament had been known to be favourable and his instincts good, the uncertainty as to his conduct, at any rate in the earlier days of his rule, would have been almost equally profound. For, in truth, the *rôle* of a "mediatized" Eastern Prince—as in fact, if not in name, the Khedive of Egypt had been ever since the events of 1882—is not one which, in actor's parlance, will "play itself," given only natural intelligence and goodwill. On the contrary, the lesson of wise and graceful submission to the controlling power of a stronger State, alien in blood, religion, and language, has

usually to be learned either in the school of personal experience or through the teaching of first-hand observation; and Abbas was too young to have had the benefit of either form of discipline. All the conditions which contributed to render the father amenable to the influence of his British guardians were lacking in the case of the son. It was impossible but that Tewfik Pasha should entertain a profound respect for the Power which had restored him to the throne he had been driven from and had put his enemies under his feet, and that he should never have forgotten throughout his reign that those who had made could in turn unmake him. But to Abbas all this was nothing but a closed, and probably half-forgotten chapter of Egyptian history. At the date of Arabi's revolt and its speedy suppression on the field of Tel-el-Kebir, he was a child, and his imperfect recollections of those important events had not, it was to be supposed, been adequately supplemented by the education which he had subsequently received in the schools of Continental Europe. The latter, at any rate, hardly represented the right quarter to go to for sound views either of our policy in Egypt or of Egypt's debt to us, and any correction of which Abbas's ideas on these subjects may have stood in need, was certainly not likely to be supplied by his Continental instructors. On the whole, therefore, it was natural enough that he should have initially misconceived the relation in which he stood to the British Government, and should have imagined that the control which they claimed to exercise over him and his policy was in the nature of a mere passing usurpation, to which his father, unnerved by his personal misfortunes, might have been willing to submit, but which a young and spirited successor might effectively resist.

He was not long in revealing the influence of this crude and boyish theory of the situation. From the moment of his accession he displayed an impatience of the British Consul-General's guidance which was of evil omen for the

future; and his tenure of the Khedivate had lasted little more than a few months, when he delivered his first defiance to his political guardians. It took the form of an abrupt dismissal of his then Prime Minister, Mustapha Fehmi, followed by the appointment of a successor who was the reverse of a *persona grata* to Her Majesty's representative at Cairo. Fakhri Pasha was an Egyptian politician who had some time previously held Ministerial office, from which he had been dismissed for good and sufficient reasons at the instance of Lord Cromer. His selection under such circumstances was, on the face of it, a challenge to the authority of the protecting Power, and was so dealt with. The Consul-General at once telegraphed to Downing Street, expressing his strong disapproval of the step, and requesting authority from the British Government to place his veto upon it. Much depends, in a matter of this kind, on the character of the particular statesman who happens for the time being to be in charge of our affairs abroad. In this instance, happily, they were in the hands of a Minister who was wanting neither in Imperial spirit nor in firmness of resolution. Lord Rosebery acceded instantly to the Consul-General's application, instructing him to take immediate action in the sense proposed. Armed with this specific addition to his general advisory powers, Lord Cromer presented himself to the Khedive, and courteously but firmly pointed out to him the necessity of revoking the act. Its revocation, however, was not easily to be obtained. For a time the rash young man remained inflexible, and more than one interview had to be held with him before he could be prevailed upon to yield. What passed at the last of these audiences—that at which his resistance was at length broken down—is, of course, an official secret; but it was believed in Cairo that language of extreme gravity had to be addressed to him by Her Majesty's representative. Report ran, indeed, that at a critical point of the interview the Consul-General had felt it his duty to direct the Khe-

dive's attention to a body of British troops, paraded for some purpose of ordinary military routine in the great square beneath the Khedive's windows, by way of tacit reminder of the presence and omnipotence of the Power which had brought back his father to the Abdin Palace, and to which he himself owed it that he stood where he did that day.

This appeal to the legions of Cæsar was a rough, almost it might be said a brutal, argument, and one assuredly which nothing short of absolute necessity would have induced a diplomatist of Lord Cromer's tact and urbanity to employ, if employ it he did; but it was an effectual and unanswerable one, and there was truer kindness in its saving severity than there would have been in weakly allowing the self-willed youth to rush upon his ruin. As it was, that catastrophe was averted. The imprudent step was retraced; Fakhri Pasha's appointment was cancelled and replaced by that of Riaz Pasha—the original demand for Mustapha Pasha's restoration having been revived with a view of breaking the Khedive's humiliating fall—and Abbas, now grown older and wiser, has already, probably, lived long enough to thank Lord Cromer for having saved him from himself.

There was, however, an international side to this Egyptian crisis, as to most others. The French Ambassador lost no time in seeking an interview with the Foreign Secretary, and intimated in the course of their conversation that the action of the British Government seemed to suggest that they claimed a right to nominate the Egyptian Prime Minister. "To this," writes Lord Rosebery in a despatch detailing the interview to the British Ambassador in Paris:—

> I said that that was not the way in which I should put the matter, but we did claim the right to give authoritative advice, in conformity with the terms of Lord Granville's despatch of the 4th January 1884, as to the choice of Ministers. Indeed, so long as the British flag was there, and the British forces in occupation, it would not be possible for us to allow the whole Administration, beginning at the top, to be reversed at the mere whim of the Khedive.

Were this to be allowed, as the Foreign Secretary remarked at a subsequent interview with M. Waddington, "there would be no safeguard whatever against the return of the worst abuses which existed under the *régime* of the ex-Khedive Ismail." And that this was no mere hypothetical danger appears from a previous despatch of Lord Cromer, in which he refers to "certain rumours" received by him "from a fairly good source, that if the Khedive is successful in the present undertaking, there will be a wholesale dismissal of English officials."

After further consideration, the French Government wisely decided to content themselves with placing their objection on diplomatic record. To quote again from one of the despatches of the Foreign Secretary to Lord Dufferin on the subject, they instructed M. Waddington—

> . . . to lay a formal protest against the action taken by Lord Cromer with reference to the nomination of Fakhri Pasha as Prime Minister in Egypt. What the French Government objected to was the high-handed nature of the proceeding. It amounted to this—that the ex-Khedive was not to appoint any Minister except at the good-will and pleasure of the British Government. Such an event was unprecedented in the history of the British occupation. It went, in the opinion of the French Government, far beyond the terms of Lord Granville's despatch, and would, His Excellency feared, be taken throughout Europe, as in France, to be a long step in the direction of actual annexation.

As regards the nature of the proceeding (continues Lord Rosebery):

> I said, in my reply to M. Waddington, that I was aware that there had been some high-handedness, but that it had been on the part of the Khedive, who without notice, warning, or consultation, has selected as his Prime Minister a person notoriously unfitted for that position. To admit such a pretension would be to deprive the British occupation of any reason for existence, as it would open the door to the very maladministration to prevent which this country had, in concert with France, intervened in Egypt. . . . . His Excellency had said that the proceeding was unprecedented, and indeed it was so, for one obvious reason. It had never happened in the reign of the Khedive Tewfik, for though

that Prince had often changed his Ministers, he had always been wise enough to take the British representative into his counsel.

Once again, and only once, did Abbas Pasha endeavour to assert his independence, and this was an attempt of a less serious and possibly not even of a premeditated character, though the extreme importance of the interests which it threatened necessitated the grave notice which was taken of it by the British Government. In January 1894 the Khedive started on a species of state progress up the Nile from Cairo to the southern limit of his dominions. From the point of view of the mere tourist no less than from that of the ruler the trip promised to be a most interesting one, since, by reason of his having spent the greater part of his boyhood in Europe, this was actually his first opportunity of paying a visit to those historic monuments of man's civilisation which make a veritable wonderland of the Nile from Cairo to the Second Cataract. To its simple community of riparian cultivators, and to the populations of the three or four towns of any importance which dot that stretch of 1,500 miles of waterway, the occasion, of course, was also one of agreeable excitement, and everywhere along his route he was received with every mark of loyal enthusiasm. It is not impossible, indeed, that to the easily bored temperament of the Oriental ruler the loyal enthusiasm became at last a little tiresome, and that he arrived at the end of his journey in a fit of ill-humour which made him equally forgetful of policy and of politeness. This, at any rate, is quite as plausible an hypothesis as that the incident which followed was the execution of any preconceived design of offering a deliberate affront to the military instructors of the army. But whatever its explanation, the fact remains that he signalised the conclusion of his progress by manifestation of real or feigned ill-temper, which gave great and just offence to the British Government, and was ultimately productive of fresh humiliation for himself.

At Wady Halfa he was received with all due honour by the Egyptian garrison of that outpost, the troops of which were paraded for his inspection, and acquitted themselves to the entire satisfaction of their British officers. Nevertheless, at the close of the ceremony, and to the astonishment of all present, the Khedive, instead of addressing the usual formal congratulations to their commanding officer, expressed extreme dissatisfaction with the condition and appearance of his troops, and in fact administered something like a public "wigging" to the Sirdar. In these surprising circumstances, General Kitchener had, of course, no option but to tender his resignation; and though the Khedive begged him to withdraw it—a fact which goes some way, though not perhaps all the way, to prove that the outbreak was unpremeditated—he declined to do so. So grave an incident as the public censure by the Khedive of the British commander, by whom and whose able and energetic staff the Egyptian army had been raised from a mob of undisciplined fellahin into something like an efficient force of fighting men, could not, of course, be allowed to pass unnoticed. Whether pre-arranged or not, it was calculated in a dangerous degree to unsettle the minds of the native population, and to affect injuriously the authority of the British Protectorate and its military prestige.

Again, therefore, was Lord Cromer compelled to telegraph home for instructions, and again came back the same swift authorisation of vigorous action. Once more had the Khedive to be informed that he must retreat with the best grace he could from the position which he had taken up: that he must promptly and unreservedly recall his words, and do his utmost to correct their mischievous influence. And, that their withdrawal might be even more conspicuous and impressive than their pronouncement, he was advised to issue a General Order expressing his satisfaction with the efficiency of his army, and his confidence in the officers to whose skill and labour that efficiency was due. This having been done, General Kitchener

resumed that post of Sirdar in which he has since achieved so brilliant a success. It was from no desire for the further humiliation of the Khedive, but in order to give the same publicity to his atonement that he had challenged for his offence, that the British Government felt it incumbent upon them to insist on the promulgation of the General Order not only in the English language, but in French and Arabic also. Thus closed the incident of Wady Halfa, and the only consolatory reflection with which the Khedive could look, or might have looked back upon it was, that he had been involuntarily instrumental in procuring the bestowal upon the creator of his "New Model Army" of a Knight Commandership of the Bath.

Thus ended the short period of friction in the intercourse between the Khedive and our Consul-General—never again, one hopes, to be renewed; and it argues a not ungenerous strain in Abbas's character that he has allowed no painful recollection of his unsuccessful struggles with Lord Cromer to mar the thorough cordiality of his relations with his British adviser. It is not impossible, too, that his two trials of strength with his guardians have taught him yet another and a hardly less valuable lesson. Assuming that he came to Cairo from his Continental schoolrooms full of the idea of reviving the old "international system," and hoping to govern, like his grandfather in the days of his solvency and power, by playing off one European Power against another, he would have had to learn from actual experience of his dealings with our rivals in Egypt how impossible, under existing conditions, the re-establishment of that system has become. The game of intrigue and counter-intrigue is very interesting, and may prove a very profitable game for the diplomatic representatives of the various European Powers to play at among themselves—provided always that they are in a position to play it on equal terms. But when one of those Powers is in military occupation of the country, when it can impose, and in the last resort will

not shrink from imposing its will upon the ruler, the game has much fewer attractions for the other players, and the point at which they decline to prolong it is much more speedily reached. In his inexperience of international politics Abbas Pasha in all probability failed to realise the fact that no representative of any Continental Power could give him anything like effective support against England without involving the State by which he was accredited in serious complications with the British Government; and the same lack of experience prevented him from perceiving that this was a position in which no such State would allow itself to be placed from a mere desire to oblige a young and ambitious Khedive, or for any other purpose than that of the deliberate execution of a predetermined policy of its own. No doubt he might have found, and possibly did find, sufficient encouragement from the Egyptian agents of one or more Continental Powers to enter upon his brief career of defiance; but when it came to a question of "seeing him through," it was another matter. It was the cat asking the monkey to assist personally in the extrication of the hot chestnuts. Abbas Pasha could not be taught too early that to rely upon the support of any other Power in a combat *à outrance* with England was to lean upon a broken reed; and, judging from his subsequent policy, there is reason to think that he made himself master of this valuable truth in the course of the years 1893–94.

When, in the black month of January 1885, the troops of the belated expedition for the relief of Gordon set their faces to the north, and retraced their path across the Sudanese desert, they might well have believed that they were bidding the final farewell of England to the accursed land. For aught, indeed, that any one could tell in those days, their retreat from the Sudan might be only the prelude to their departure from Egypt. The flag which had fallen at Khartum might at no distant date be lowered at Cairo, and the Government which had been too late to save the one city might of their own

accord withdraw from the other. No one knew in 1885—the then Secretary for War, it will be remembered, less than any one—how long the British occupation of Egypt would last; and if any one, soldier or civilian, Tory or Radical, had hazarded the forecast that in that same month ten years later there would still be a British garrison at Cairo and British officers in command of Egyptian and Sudanese troops at Wady Halfa, his prediction would in all likelihood have been received with the most contemptuous incredulity. Infinitely more derisive, however, would have been the reception given to the prophecy that in yet another four years' time the British and Egyptian flags would be flying side by side over the ruined palace of Khartum.

Nevertheless, it might have been possible even then for a military expert to contend that the former of the two forecasts was really of a more speculative character than the latter, and that if England were still the military protector of Egypt in 1895, it was not so difficult, after all, to believe that by 1899 she would have pushed forward her outposts to Khartum. To those who best knew Egypt and the Sudan, Gordon's warning to his Government, that they would have to "smash up the Mahdi," had lost none of its real weight by losing through the death of Mohammed Ahmed its literal accuracy. The necessity of stamping out Mahdism, and of clearing the upper reaches of the Nile of the fanatical marauders who were devastating the land in the name of their False Prophet, and for sheer lust of plunder and bloodshed, would remain as imperative under the leadership of the Khalifa as under that of the Mahdi; and what is more (these same experts could have told, and, indeed, did tell us), it would, in all human probability, become more and more urgent every year. The notion that it was possible for any ruler of Egypt to draw a line across the map a couple of miles or so to the north of the Second Cataract, and say: "This for the future shall be the southern frontier of my dominions; within it all shall be peace and security for the cultivator, let

the Dervish rage never so furiously without," was a notion which could never have been given a moment's entertainment by any but a Gladstonian Administration at their wits' end. One does not expect, of course, to be able to find a "scientific frontier" in a desert, but there is something between a scientific frontier and an imaginary boundary traced across the sands of a wilderness and the waters of a river, when even the out-post set up to indicate and guard it owns absolutely nothing of its defensive strength to any natural conformation of the ground. For the purposes of protecting the population of Egypt and excluding their savage enemies, it might just as well have been delineated five hundred miles to the north at Assuan. Better indeed; for Egypt would have had five hundred miles less of territory to protect, and would by its abandonment, have parted only with a possession of little value.

For nowhere, probably, in the whole course of the mighty river from Cairo to Dongola is there to be found a stretch of Nile bank of equal length which is of less productive value. Between the First and the Second Cataracts the river flows no longer through wide and level reaches, belted broadly with rich alluvium generously responsive to the cultivator's toil. For several miles it strains in a swift and narrow torrent through rocky and barren gorges, and for many a league thereafter it is margined by arid and stony shores, diversified only by slender strips of tillage. The Nubian hamlets on either bank are sparse and poor, and everywhere along the lengthy tract of waterway the signs of poverty prevail. Yet the inhabitants had lives and cattle and their little hoards of silver to protect from the desert robbers; and to the garrison at Wady Halfa the task of patrolling this five hundred miles of comparatively worthless territory was one requiring an activity and vigilance which, however untiring, could not in the nature of things be reasonably effective.

At one time the Dervishes waxed bold enough to assemble

in force, and actually to threaten Wady Halfa itself; and well would it have been, perhaps, for the unfortunate fellahin of that region if they had more often been similarly inspired; for the crushing defeat inflicted on them at Toski, August 3rd, 1889, by Sir Francis Grenfell, then Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, when their leader, the notorious Wad-el-Njumi, was slain, administered a lesson to which the land owed several years of comparative repose. But by the beginning of 1896 the sporadic molestations of the Egyptian peasantry along these reaches of the Nile had become intolerable. A month or two before the close of the previous year the Dervishes had suddenly descended upon the village of Atandan, a few miles from Korosko, slaughtering many of the villagers, and disappearing again into the desert with their booty so rapidly as to defy the efforts of the swift and efficient Camel Corps at Wady Halfa to overtake them. In January 1896 the Nile trip between the First and Second Cataracts had, in consequence of the restlessness of the Dervishes, to be officially forbidden to sailing *dahabiyehs*, which could not, it was thought, be moored to the banks by night without danger; while even the tourist steamers, which anchor after nightfall in midstream, were not allowed to make the journey without an escort of Sudanese soldiers. It needed no special experience of the country to convince the traveller n the Upper Nile during that month of the grave apprehensions of the military authorities; while the signs of activity which were visible on the armour-plated steamers at Shellal appeared to the more watchful observer to indicate that an effort to deal once for all with the long-standing source of these anxieties was in early contemplation.

And in truth the situation had by this time become plainly impossible. The fantastic conception of a peaceful and prosporous Egypt flourishing unmolested behind its imaginary frontier at Wady Halfa, while the Dervish hordes were content to dwell in amiable and neighbourly quiescence on the other

side of it, had become a demonstrated absurdity; and even if no definite idea of the conquest of the Sudan had been entertained, it is certain that in the interests of the tranquillity and well-being of the outlying populations of Egypt a forward movement had become imperative. Very wisely, however, the British Government rejected the idea of a reversion to the old and discarded policy of "slaughter and scuttle." To despatch "expeditions of chastisement" into the territory of a barbarous neighbour, retreating afterwards within its own borders, is all very well for a State which is satisfied—as is our case, for instance, in North-Western India—with its existing frontier; but with such a frontier as that which had been imposed upon Egypt in 1884 it would have been the height of improvidence not to extend her limits by re-annexing to the dominions of the Khedive any territory which could be successfully cleared of the predatory barbarians by whom it had for so many years been over-run. It was, accordingly, with much satisfaction that the British public learned that for the moment the objective of the expedition was to be Dongola, and that upon our recovering possession of that city, it and the province of which it was the capital would be permanently occupied and held in the name of the Khedive.

Nevertheless, it was of course thought right to conform so far to our well-established traditions of Parliamentary Government as to minimise the importance of the expedition in every possible way, and to give every reason for it but the true one, or at any rate the strongest of the true ones. It had become necessary, the House of Commons was told, to anticipate an impending attack from the Dervishes. We should also be obliging Italy—a friendly Power, just then in difficulties at Kassala—by a forward movement which could hardly fail to effect a diversion in her favour. Besides, we had no notion of going any further than Dongola, which, after all, was only a little way, though it was not absolutely certain that we should even go as far. How far we actually should go would depend on the

amount of resistance that we met with, and of our success in dealing with it; and so forth, and so forth. Such was the invariable tone of the Ministerial replies given nightly from the Treasury Bench, and received with equally decorous gravity by the House of Commons. Yet all the time, it may safely be said, there was not one intelligent Member in ten who entertained the slightest doubt that the real objective of the expedition was not Dongola but Khartum, while it is highly probable that at least one in twenty suspected the truth, which became patent to all the world two years afterwards at Fashoda, that the most powerful of the motives impelling the Government forward was, not dread of the Dervishes nor goodwill towards Italy, but anxiety about the head waters of the Nile.

The leaders of the Opposition, however, were not among the number of those suspicious persons, or discretion, it is to be feared, would hardly have prevented them from charging the Government with the design of offering a wanton provocation to France. What they could do, however, in the way of protest, they did. They challenged the validity of the Ministerial justifications for the advance, contesting the alleged necessity of repressing the insolent hostility of the Dervishes, and deriding the idea that it was any business of ours to help Italy out of the difficulties in which her African adventures had landed her. Had they confined themselves to criticism of Ministerial policy they would have been on safe ground; but unfortunately they launched out into prophecy, and some of them were guilty of predictions which to-day it must make them extremely uncomfortable to remember. For whatever the motive or motives of the advance into the Sudan, they were convinced to a man that it would result in failure. Our old friend Cambyses was not, to the best of one's recollection, again invoked; but the memory of that monarch's unfortunate Sudanese expedition was evidently still as fresh in the minds of English Radicals as it had been when Mr Gladstone had referred to it twelve years before. They were persuaded that the mere word Sudan spelt

disaster for any invader of that territory from an Egyptian base, whether he bore a Persian or an English name. If the projected expedition were to stop at Dongola, it was just possible that no great harm might come of it; but then it would never be able to stop at Dongola, even if its commander wished to do so, than which nothing was more improbable. The one invariable characteristic of such invasions was that the invader could not halt if he would. In assenting to the mild-looking enterprise of a march to Dongola, Her Majesty's Government were in reality committing themselves to the much larger adventure of a reconquest of the Sudan; if they sustained reverses, the necessity of retrieving and avenging them was imperative, while successes would give irresistible force to the demand for an advance to Khartum. That the improved Egyptian army, stiffened by a very considerable infusion of British troops, might succeed in such an undertaking those critics of the expedition did not go quite so far as to deny; but they were perfectly sure that it could only be accomplished at a quite disproportionate cost in blood and treasure, and that even by accomplishing it we should have done no more than replace the Khedive once more in possession of a vast tract of comparatively unproductive territory, swarming with still unsubdued enemies, incapable of defence, either by his own unassisted military strength or, except at the cost of an intolerable drain upon our resources, by British arms.

Such was the view taken, urged with the utmost insistence by the Opposition, of the advance into the Sudan, and at the moment it undoubtedly produced an impression on a certain portion of the public. Even those who were not much moved by the alarmist exaggerations of the difficulties of the conquest looked with some misgivings on what was to follow. After all allowance made for the improvement effected in the Egyptian army by its British instructors, they did not feel convinced that Abbas Pasha would be any more capable of permanently holding the Sudan than his father before him;

and they did not see how he was to be enabled to do so, except by unduly taxing the military resources of the protecting Power. In short, that idea of the Sudan on which the Opposition dwelt so persistently—the conception of a country which even after its conquest would continue to "swarm with the still unsubdued enemies" of its conquerors—was still dominant in many British minds.

This, however, only meant that the public in this country had not kept abreast of the information accumulated during the previous fourteen years by the able Intelligence Department in Cairo. The average Englishman's notions of the Sudan and its tribal populations dated exclusively from 1884. If he had been disabused of the Gladstonian illusion of the Mahdists (than which nothing probably would have more powerfully excited their contempt) as "a people rightly struggling to be free," it was probably the whole extent of his enlightenment. To him the Sudan was still a country not merely over-run but peopled by a virtually homogeneous race of fanatical warriors, united in a common hatred not only of Christianity, but of orthodox Islam, and ever burning to be led to battle against the soldiers of either faith. Nothing, of course, could be further from the actual facts than this conception of them. So far from being peopled by a homogeneous race, the Sudan was inhabited by a number of tribes of widely varying characters and habits; while the particular tribesmen who dominated the country were intruders from the Western Sudan, who, so far from "rightly struggling to be free," had succeeded in wrongfully reducing the people of the Eastern portion of the territory to a condition of cruel and abject slavery. The Baggaras, in fact, from whom the Mahdi's, and after him the Khalifa's, forces were mainly recruited, have always represented the principal element of fanaticism, of marauding activity, of murderous barbarity, and, one must add, of personal bravery and military aptitude, in the whole region. These left out of account, there were, and always had

been, plenty of Sudanese who were desirous of living by trade or tillage, or, generally speaking, by the arts of peace, and who then were too thoroughly cowed by their brutal oppressors to resist, or to offer effective aid to their liberators. It was not, therefore, a question of conquering a country and holding it permanently against the will of the majority of its inhabitants, but, on the contrary, of ridding it of the tyranny of a barbarous minority from which the rest of the population asked nothing better than to be relieved. Our mission, in short, was not that of subjugating the Sudanese, but that of clearing their country for them of the predatory and bloodthirsty intruders who for so many years had laid it waste.

One other pretext for their denunciations of the forward policy remained to the Opposition, and that lay in the insinuation—for they scarcely ventured to give it the form of a positive assertion—that the advance had been urged upon the Government by ambitious military chiefs without the approval, if not positively against the advice, of their civil representative in Egypt. Lord Cromer, it was hinted, was opposed to it. The Government had acted either without consulting him, or else in defiance of his advice. This must be so; for was he not one of the original advisers of the abandonment of the Sudan? And was it credible that any man who had advised such a step as this in 1883 could be prepared to recommend a reversal of it in 1896?

This last mode of stating their line of argument is really hardly an ironical one, so profound was the ignorance displayed by most of these English rulers of all that had happened during the previous thirteen years. That Lord Cromer did not in 1883 foresee the situations and conditions of 1896 is simply to say that he was not possessed of any supernatural gift of prophecy. For all that was visible at the former date to the most prescient of observers, the English occupation of Egypt might come to an end any day; and, of course, if we had quitted the country with our work unfinished, it is obvious

enough that a native Government which had been too weak to hold the Sudan could not possibly have recovered it. But so soon as it became certain that England had no mind to leave Egypt till her work was completed—and still more when the military portion of that work was so far advanced as to place the country in possession of a well-drilled and disciplined army—the situation was entirely altered. Recovery of the Sudan became at once an attainable object of Egyptian policy, and the only question that remained was whether it was a desirable one. On this question Lord Cromer was much too far-sighted a statesman to have any doubts. As a matter of fact, and as is now well known to all who had been admitted to his confidence, the British Consul-General was as firmly convinced as any one of the absolute necessity of a reconquest of the Sudan, not merely for the due development of Egyptian prosperity, but for the actual safety of the country and the stability of the Khedive's rule within his own borders. Hence the general policy of the enterprise had his hearty approval, and it was promoted by him, not only as a matter of duty, but with all the energy of personal goodwill.

By the European Powers, as a whole, the projected advance into the Sudan was regarded without disfavour, if not with active approval. The exceptions, of course, were France and Russia; and in pursuance of what an English Minister was afterwards to describe as her "policy of pin-pricks," the former Power seized through its representative on the first opportunity of putting an obstacle in our path. The Reserve Fund at the disposal of the Commissioner of the Caisse amounted at that time to nearly three millions sterling, and the Egyptian Government, acting under British advice, applied to that body for an advance of half-a-million out of the fund, in order to meet the charges of the expedition. On the face of it the proposal was a perfectly justifiable one. By the terms of the Law of Liquidation of 1880 the Commission of the Caisse was specially authorised, on the application of the

Egyptian Government, to devote from time to time a portion of the Reserve Fund to meeting any extraordinary expenditure which might be required by that Government beyond the ordinary expenses of the year; and it was held, assuredly not without reason, that there could be no more legitimate source of extraordinary expenditure than an expedition for the recovery of a lost and fertile province, together with the natural wealth contained in its soil and the revenues arising therefrom. This, indeed, was the view taken by the majority of the Commissioners, four out of six of whom gave their sanction to the proposed grant, two only—the French and Russian Commissioners—withholding theirs. Nobody, of course, ever doubted then, or doubts now, that the dissentient minority voted under the influence of political considerations; but neither did anybody doubt then that their dissent, however prompted, was inoperative, and that the decision of the majority of the Commissioners was final.

To the surprise, however, of all parties, including possibly even the successful remonstrants against the decision, it was reversed by the Mixed Tribunals in a Court of First Instance, and the reversal was confirmed on appeal. The case was brought before these Courts on the motion of certain Egyptian bondholders, who—acting presumably under French instigation—took proceedings against the Commissioners of the Caisse as for a breach of the Law of Liquidation, by diverting the funds entrusted to them from the purposes to which they were dedicated under the terms of that law. The Commission, of course, contended that the decision of the majority of their body was binding on the whole; but the Court of First Instance and Appeal held otherwise. They ruled that the authorisation of the Commissioners must be an unanimous one, and gave judgment for the plaintiffs.

In so far as this decision proceeded merely upon an erroneous construction of the particular provision in the Law of Liquidation, by which the procedure of the Commissioners was governed,

there would be little to be said about it, except that it was perverse. But the terms of the judgment delivered in the Appellate Court suggest that its judges conceived themselves possessed of a considerably higher jurisdiction than this. In that judgment they appear to assert a right to review the administrative decisions of the Commission on their merits, and to determine whether any given advance of money out of the Reserve Fund is or is not legitimately applicable to the particular purpose to which the Government propose to apply it. In other words, they claim to decide any such question, if so it seems good to them, in a sense directly contrary to that of the body to which the discretionary right of sanctioning or disallowing advances from the Reserve Fund has been specially entrusted by the Great Powers.

## CHAPTER X

### THE ADVANCE OF THE SIRDAR

In the early spring of 1896 preparations for the advance began. The Sirdar, accompanied by Major (now Sir F. R.) Wingate, Chief of the Intelligence Department, and Slatin Pasha, the ten years' prisoner, now returning with "fire and sword" to the stronghold of his savage captor, left Cairo on the 21st March for Assuan and Wady Halfa with the First Battalion of the North Staffordshire Regiment, while simultaneously an advance column of the Egyptian and Sudanese troops pushed forward from the latter place to Akasheh, which they took without opposition, and at once proceeded to fortify.

This, however, was but a mere preparatory move. No advance in force could take place until the Nile was in a condition to permit of river operations; and for this a delay of some nine or ten weeks was necessary. Nevertheless it was not pure loss of time, for the railway, which was afterwards to play so important a part in the work of conquest, was in the meanwhile pushed on with all possible speed from Wady Halfa. By the beginning of June the Nile had risen enough for military purposes; on the 6th of the month the expedition resumed its forward march, and at Firket the Dervishes and the Egyptian troops of the Khedive "saw the whites of each other's eyes" for the first time since the disasters of thirteen years before.

It was an anxious moment for their master and for the British instructors who had remade his army. For, so far as race and status and civil occupation were concerned, these men

were the brothers and fellow-villagers of the unhappy mob of fellahin who had sallied forth in 1883 under Hicks Pasha to leave their bones in the desert of Kordofan. Drilled and disciplined though they had been for years, this was their ..st experience of actual warfare; and until they were thus ctually put to the proof, not even the ablest military expert ould tell for certain whether any amount of training would .vail to animate this timid and unwarlike race of husbandmen with the almost mechanical courage of the professional soldier. The Sudanese could be trusted to face the Dervishes, for they, like their adversaries, came of a race of born fighters; and in ich a congenial soil as their natural temperament offered, it was easy enough to plant the artificial virtues of the military man. But the fellah of the Nile Valley had to rid himself of hereditary instincts and inveterate habits before he could be so much as prepared for the acquisition of the soldierly character. Should the attempt to make a soldier of him prove to have failed, it was felt that it would be a final and a fatal failure. For it was not sufficient for us to conquer the Sudan by British arms and Sudanese auxiliaries; it was essential that it should be conquered mainly by those who would have to defend it after its conquest—the Egyptians themselves.

All doubts of this kind were happily dispersed on the field of Firket. The Egyptian army were, in the expressive language of the trainer, "tried high" in this the first of their engagements. The position occupied by the Dervishes was a formidable one, and they defended it with their usual desperate valour, but they were eventually dislodged from it, and routed with considerable loss. A few, however, disdained flight, and, though repeatedly called upon to surrender, died sword in hand. Eighty of these heroes were killed in one hut, and no fewer than thirty Dervish Emirs, including Hammuda, a notable well remembered by Slatin Pasha from the days of his captivity, were left dead on the field. The obstinacy of resistance points to equally hard fighting on the side of the

attacking force, while the steady behaviour of the latter when the positions were reversed is sufficiently attested by the fact that a charge of the Dervish cavalry was repulsed at the point of the bayonet by the Egyptian line. The moral effect of the victory was immense, and its military result important; for it was promptly followed by the evacuation of Suarda, which had long been the head-quarters of the Dervishes, and the abandonment of a large quantity of supplies.

From Suarda the march was pursued without further resistance to Kosheh, where the expedition halted for the last time before the advance upon Dongola. Here the first real difficulties of the enterprise were to begin. War in Oriental countries exposes the soldier to other, and often more dangerous enemies than those against whom he goes forth, and campaigning in the hot weather much increases the probability of his meeting them. Cholera broke out among the troops under the midsummer heats, and during the months of July and August the camp suffered rather severely. Another disaster befell them in the course of the famous Absarat desert march of thirty-six miles. The troops were overtaken by a violent storm of wind, sand, and rain, and in the dust and confusion of the scene men strayed wholesale from the route. In the result some 300 of the Sudanese faced about, and eventually made their way back, weak and exhausted, with the loss of some eight or ten of their number. The dimensions of the mishap were considerably exaggerated at home, and there were not wanting critics who complained that the risk of this casualty might have been much reduced, if not avoided altogether, had the Government elected to make the first move in September instead of in March. This complaint, however, takes no account of the critical condition of things which was prevailing in the Eastern Sudan at the time when the order to advance was given. European prestige in this region had just received a heavy blow from the crushing defeat of an Italian army; and if the disaster thus sustained on the east

of the Nile had not been followed up as promptly as it was by the advance of another Power up the river valley, it is impossible to say what effect the elation of an unreversed victory might not have produced in the minds of the desert tribes, and what it might not have done to concentrate their forces and attract new recruits to their banners. As it was, we now know that the speedy despatch of the Egyptian troops from the frontier at Wady Halfa created a scare among the Dervishes, and that before they had time to recover it, we had routed and rolled them back many miles to the south.

On the 19th of September the final blow of the year's campaign was struck, in a battle which was well described as "a cross between an artillery duel and a naval engagement," and was, perhaps, the most singular contest that ever took place between a civilised army and a barbarian foe. After a toilsome desert march throughout the previous day, the force bivouacked about a mile to the north of the rock of Abu Fatmeh, and some six miles from the Dervish fortified post of Kerma, where it was expected that the enemy, led by Wad-el-Bishara, the Governor of the Dongola province, who had come north with reinforcements, would make a determined stand. At four in the morning of the 19th the troops set out again, but found on reaching Kerma at daybreak that the fort had been evacuated. The Dervish commander had, in fact, withdrawn across the Nile to Hafir, where, as soon as day broadened, his position was plainly discernible. It had been well selected, commanding as it did the very point on the river at which the Sirdar had intended to throw his troops across. Its defences, too, were strong enough to offer a considerable resistance to the light field guns which constituted the only artillery that the expedition was able to bring to bear upon them from the opposite bank. Fire was, however, opened upon them at a range of about 2000 yards, at seven o'clock, though with comparatively little effect, and without eliciting any reply.

With the arrival of the three gunboats, which shortly afterwards came steaming up the river, the fight began in earnest. At a distance of about 1000 yards they opened fire upon the enemy, who after a time replied with artillery and small arms from the works along the banks, while crowds of Dervish riflemen armed with Remingtons swarmed down to the water's edge and kept up a brisk fusillade on the advancing gunboats. So hot, indeed, was the defensive fire, that the boats had to retreat down the river to a distance of some 1500 yards, whence, however, they kept up a continuous bombardment at longer range. Once more they were swung round into line, and again advancing up the stream made vigorous play with their machine-guns on the forts; and thus for two hours the artillery duel went on, the superiority in number and power of weapons being upon the Egyptian side, but the Dervishes sticking to their guns with the same tenacity which they displayed in the open field. Over and over again, as one gun after another was temporarily disabled, it was thought that their batteries were silenced; but no sooner did the steamer cease firing than a gun would be run out and a shot discharged at them. Finally, at a little before 11 A.M., the shore-works having by this time been practically disabled by the cannonade, the three gunboats were sent forward under order to steam past Hafir towards Dongola.

In this engagement between river craft and shore-batteries the land forces of the expedition had taken hardly any part, but they reaped ample fruit from the victory. The bombardment had, in fact, broken the neck of the Dervish resistance, and when, a few days later, the troops of the Sudan marched upon Dongola, the gunboats at the same time steaming side by side with them, they found their work already as good as done. Starting at five o'clock in the morning, they reached Wad-el-Bishara's encampment in about an hour; but during the necessary delay caused by a short artillery engagement between the forts and the steamers, the Dervish leader and his

principal lieutenant took to flight, and the Egyptians gained an almost bloodless victory over his demoralised and disorganised followers. The cavalry by land and the gunboats by water pursued the flying foe, but armed resistance, in any serious sense of the word, was over, and hundreds surrendered themselves passively to the victors. That night the Sirdar's army encamped within the mud walls of the city, and Dongola was restored to the dominions of the Khedive.

The reconquest of this portion of the Sudan was, of course, but a small instalment of the work which has since been accomplished, but its moral importance was vastly greater than its material dimensions. It was, indeed, significant of much, and its effect was at once apparent in a sensible abatement—sensible in both senses of the word—of the vehemence of that adverse criticism, sometimes malicious, sometimes merely despondent, which had been provoked in certain quarters by the project of an advance into the Sudan. Many of the croakers ceased from croaking, and some of the party orators thought it prudent to moderate the rancour of their attacks on our Egyptian policy when Dongola had fallen with such comparative ease into our hands. For, in truth, that event decided more than one important point in our favour, and disposed of more than one theory which had been taken for granted to our disadvantage.

To begin with, it proved, as has already been pointed out, the real existence of that much-debated creation of British energy and capacity—an Egyptian army. In the next place it exposed the puerile absurdity of that conception of the Sudanese population in general which had been more or less founded on Mr Gladstone's "schoolboy debating club" notion of the Dervishes as a "people rightly struggling to be free." The unfeigned joy and relief with which the oppressed and harried people of that devastated region welcomed the British advance, the crowd of long-exiled traders and other peaceful

inhabitants of the reconquered province by whom the expedition was accompanied, the unmistakable evidence, in short, that the Sirdar and his troops were hailed by the true Dongolese as deliverers, had swept all this nonsense away for ever; and whatever might still be said against the expedition from the point of view of policy, it was no longer possible to represent as a mere adventure of aggression and aggrandisement an enterprise which had so obviously served the cause of humanity and civilisation. And last, but not least, the ease with which the operations of 1896 were carried to a successful issue had demonstrated the utter hollowness of that favourite bugbear of the British Radical—the assumed invincibility of the Dervishes when fighting on their own ground; or, at any rate, the alleged impossibility of clearing them out of the region which they had so long infested, except by military efforts too great and too costly to be worth making.

The complete refutation of this last contention incidentally revealed to those who had been in the habit of underrating it the power of the military arm which British soldiers had been fashioning, and the thoroughness of the military administrative system which British soldiers had been patiently building up in Egypt from the commencement of the occupation. Their grudging critics at home had not, it is true, overestimated the difficulties of the task which they had to perform. Wady Halfa, the frontier and advanced post of operations, is distant, roughly speaking, 1000 miles from Cairo, and all communications had to be carried on by alternate railway and river travel. An army numbering with non-combatants about 20,000 men, together with their transport animals and materials of war, and a camel transport corps of 2000 men, many of whom knew nothing of that peculiar animal, had to be trained, armed, set to work, and kept at it; and so rapidly and thoroughly was this work accomplished that these raw amateurs, as they were at starting, became one of the most efficient branches of the force, making long and toilsome marches,

sometimes 40 miles a day, without the least abatement of their good spirits or good humour. When, moreover, it is remembered that the amount of food and forage required by the expeditionary force amounted to some 50 tons a day, all of which had to be sent, not only over the distance of 1000 miles, but latterly 500 miles further, some idea may be formed of the labour entailed in forwarding such an amount of material, and keeping a month's stock ahead in case of accidents. It meant the employment of steamers as well as sailing craft by hundreds on the reaches of the river, and, in addition, camel transport round the cataracts, and from the railroad to the army in the field.

All these details may not, perhaps, have been fully realised by desponding or malicious critics of the undertaking; but both classes of objectors were vaguely conscious that British military organisation in Egypt had already achieved a remarkable work, and had achieved it with signal ease. On the whole, therefore, they thought it better not to be so liberal for the future in their prophecies of failure. And the event was destined to show that they were right.

The middle year of the campaign for the recovery of the Sudan, though it was the least fruitful of the three in stirring incidents of warfare, was far from being the least important in its relation to the final result. For it may safely be said that it was in 1897 that the work of "organising victory"—a work begun so energetically in the preceding year—was definitively accomplished. Its working months were patiently spent in preparations to strike the blow which should shatter Mahdism to pieces. When the fighting season of 1898 arrived, it only remained to deliver it.

On the 4th of May in the former year the railway which was being constructed to connect the province of Dongola with Halfa had reached its terminus at Kerma, just above the Third Cataract, and its completion set free all the men employed upon it for service in the military line across the loop of desert from

Halfa to Abu Hammed, of which, as yet, only 15 out of some 230 miles had been laid. Meantime all was quiet at the frontier stations which we were holding on the Nile. The conquest of Dongola had given us the command of the whole bend of the river as high up as Merawi, at which point, as at Debbeh and Korti, we had established garrisons. The Dervishes were holding Abu Hammed, but they made no sign. A reconnaissance thrown out in the direction of that place led to the surprise of a small body of Dervish cavalry by our own troopers, and an indecisive skirmish ensued; but the spring passed without any incident of the slightest military importance.

Late in June, however, there seemed a prospect of action. The Intelligence Department got news that the Khalifa was about to send a large force under his ablest general, Mahmud, to take strategic occupation of Metemmeh, and that the Jaalin tribe, whose capital it was, had vainly begged him not to do so, undertaking to be responsible for holding it themselves against the invading force. The Khalifa angrily refused their request, and thereupon the Jaalin, resolving to throw in their lot with us, applied to the Sirdar for assistance. It was impossible, however, to send them aid in the form of men. To plant a small Egyptian force in Metemmeh would have been hazardous to the last degree; to take his whole army there would have meant leaving the Dervish garrisons of Berber and Abu Hammed in his flank and rear, to say nothing of the difficulty of transport across the Bayuda desert for the provisioning of so large a force. The British column which crossed the same desert in 1884 was only 2,500 strong, yet it was found extremely hard to keep even this comparatively small force provided with their supplies.

The Sirdar could only see his way to helping the Jaalin with arms and ammunition, and accordingly ordered 6000 rifles and good store of cartridges to be sent to them; but they never reached the unfortunate tribe. Mahmud had heard of their application to General Kitchener, and was determined to frus-

trate the reply. He made a swift descent upon Metemmeh, and, after the repulse of a first attack, succeeded in capturing it and putting its inhabitants without distinction of age or sex to the sword. Only the young women were spared for the harems of the victors. A broken remnant of the tribe fled to Gakdul wells in the desert, whence they arrived destitute at Merawi.

By the end of July the desert railway, advancing at the rate of a mile and a quarter per day, had reached a point 115 miles from Halfa, and the rail-head was now nearer to Abu Hammed than our most advanced post on the Nile. It was, in fact, getting too near to be pushed further by a mere construction party of 3,000 men, depending for their water-supply on a single line of hastily laid railway; and to carry it any nearer to a place still in the hands of the enemy would have been a little too audacious. Abu Hammed itself must be taken before the railway could be proceeded with, and, as a preliminary to attacking, a tribe of friendly Arabs were advised to make a reconnaissance to ascertain its strength. They reported that there were about 450 Dervish riflemen and 50 cavalry in the place, besides a force of about 600 of the inhabitants, armed only with spears and clubs. The smallness of this garrison, however, was due only to difficulties of supply, and on the news of our approach, which they were expecting about high Nile, between the 15th and 20th of August, they would be reinforced.

The Sirdar did not propose to minister to the needs of their Intelligence Department. His idea, with which the Dervishes had not apparently reckoned, was to surprise and take the place before they were aware of his intended coming, or in a position to reinforce themselves from Berber. Accordingly, about a fortnight before the date fixed in anticipation by the Dervishes for our arrival, a force of 2,700 men, consisting of the 9th, 10th, and 11th Sudanese and the 3rd Egyptians, with one mule battery and twenty-five troopers, set out suddenly and secretly for Abu Hammed, while at the same time the

enemy were further thrown off their guard by a demonstration of the Camel Corps and friendly Arabs in the direction of Metemmeh. The column had 118 miles of difficult country to get over in order to reach Abu Hammed before it was reinforced from Berber; and in the hot season of the year, when the alternative lies between facing the glare of the sun by day, or advancing by night marches and being prevented by the heat from making up arrears of sleep during the daylight hours, an expedition of this sort is trying even to the toughest campaigner. The ground was wretched going, the column had to advance in single file, with its transport tailing out for miles. After two or three days of it, the men had the greatest difficulty in keeping awake, even on the march. Nevertheless, the thing was done, and the 118 miles accomplished in no more than seven days and a half. By 2 A.M. on the 7th of August, General Hunter's force was within 1½ miles of Abu Hammed.

The Commander of the expedition had decided to attack both along the river bank from the west and also from the desert, and by 5 A.M. he had formed up his force within about a quarter of a mile of the town, but not a sign of the enemy could be descried. An officer, however, who had been sent forward to reconnoitre the position, unexpectedly drew a volley from trenches distant only 80 yards. The Dervish position was situated, as indeed was the town itself, at the bottom of a sort of crater, into which the ground suddenly dropped at about 200 yards from the river bank. Of course the mule battery was immediately brought up and opened fire; but the nature of the ground only allowed them to hit the tops of the houses; and even after changing their position so as to enfilade the trenches, the guns could not be depressed enough for a thoroughly effective cannonade. Accordingly, without awaiting any further results from so ineffective a bombardment, General Hunter ordered the infantry to assault. The intention of Colonel Macdonald, who led them, was to carry the place at

the point of the bayonet; but his men suddenly broke into rapid independent firing under conditions as dangerous to their comrades as to the enemy. Vigorous action—and language—became necessary on the part of their commander to repress this ebullition of inopportune rifle-shots, and in the meantime the enemy, "potting" at troops on the edge of the crater, and silhouetted against the sky-line, contrived to do more damage than ought to have been possible to them. Fortunately, the resistance at this juncture suddenly collapsed. The Dervishes began to bolt from their trenches into the houses behind, and our troops rushed forward to enter the place with them. There was a short interval of desperate house-to-house fighting, and then the Sudanese—who seem to take kindly to this uncomfortable species of warfare—swarmed all over the place, on roofs and through windows, until in an incredibly short space of time they had cleared Abu Hammed of its unmounted defenders, and were firing volleys at a few flying Dervish cavalry, who were the only ones to escape. The place was ours; and the commander of the enemy's forces, dragged out from beneath a bed under which he was hiding, was brought before General Hunter, between whom and his captive, to quote from the account of a military eye-witness, the following colloquy, marked on the side of Mohammed Zain by the usual hardihood of these defiant enemies of ours, ensued:—

GEN. H. Why did you fight? Didn't you know it was useless?

MOHAM. ZAIN. I knew you had only three times as many men as I had, and every one of my men is worth four of yours; you could not give fire till you were quite close up, and at that range our rifles are as good as yours; and, at any rate, I have killed a lot of your men.

GEN. H. What will Mahmud do now? Will he stay looting and robbing at Metemmeh, or will he come down here to attack me?

MOHAM. ZAIN. He will be down here in five days' time to wipe you out.

Mahmud, it is needless to say, did not keep the appointment thus so confidently made for him; but General Hunter's position in Abu Hammed was none the less a somewhat

precarious one. The retreating of his force by camels over 118 miles of terribly difficult country was necessarily a slow process, and had Mahmud appeared—as he might have any day—with a large force at his back, he would have found the expedition without sufficient supplies to stand even a short siege. Gunboats and smaller craft laden with provisions were struggling with difficulty up the cataracts. Accidents of one kind and another befell them, as was also the fate of the land convoys, and the reappearance of even a small band of Dervishes on the scene of their late defeat would have seriously embarrassed us. Fortunately for us, however, the Dervishes, so far from thinking of a renewal of the attack, were meditating a fresh retreat. While General Hunter was waiting at Abu Hammed for supplies, news reached him, that the Dervish Emir Zebehr was evacuating Berber. Embarking, therefore, on the first gunboat that reached him, he proceeded up the river, and found to his equal surprise and satisfaction that the report was true. Berber had, in fact, been evacuated by the Khalifa, who probably thought that our main advance was going to be on Metemmeh, in the same way that the British desert column advanced in 1884, and that we had captured Abu Hammed only to protect our flank and rear. The great struggle, he no doubt supposed, would be likely to take place at Metemmeh, and there would be much risk of his losing this place were he to send Mahmud forward to reinforce Berber. In these circumstances, of course, there was nothing for it but to withdraw his garrison of 5,000 men from the last-mentioned town, and to allow it to fall into our hands.

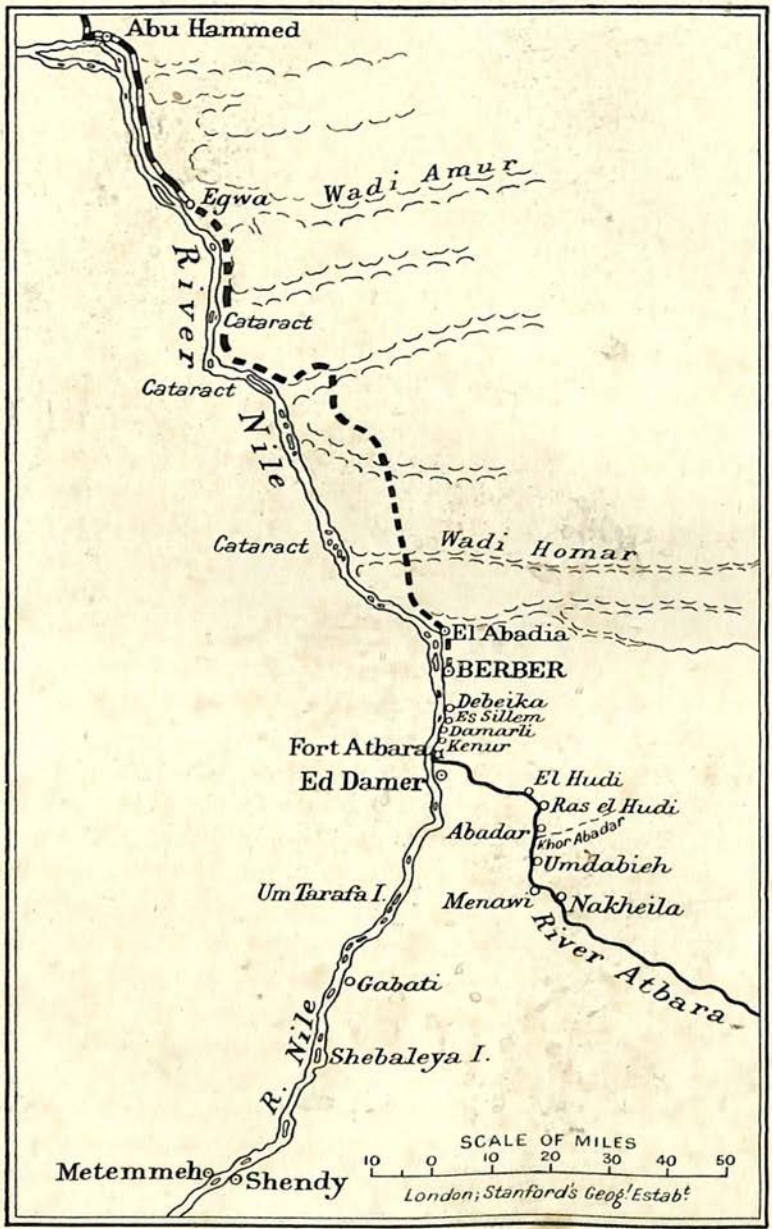
If these were the Khalifa's calculations—as in all probability they were—there could hardly be a higher testimony to the wisdom of the Sirdar's strategy in threatening Metemmeh, by way of masking General Hunter's advance on Abu Hammed.

The occupation of Berber, however, though it brought us one step, and an important step, nearer to our goal, was for the moment a somewhat serious aggravation of our difficulties. It

meant that the military progress of the Sirdar's force was unavoidably outstripping that of his transport arrangements. Already it had been shown to be no easy matter to supply Abu Hammed, and here we were about to put another 130 miles between us and our base. As matters stood, supplies starting from Cairo had to go 390 miles by rail to Nag' Hamadeh, thence by boat 145 miles to Assuan, then 4 miles by rail round the cataract to Shellal, then 220 miles by boat to Halfa, 203 miles by rail from Halfa to Kerma, 118 more by boat to Kasingar, whence they had to be dragged up through the cataracts and sent on camel-back to Abu Hammed. It was a serious matter to add another 130 miles of river—especially of river which was continuously navigable only during the next three months. Had it not been for the rapid progress which was being made with the desert railway from Halfa to Abu Hammed, the completion of which would shorten the journey above described by no fewer than eighteen days, the Sirdar might well have hesitated to take the risk of occupying Berber. But with the railway almost growing behind him, it was a risk worth facing, and he faced it. Forty-five miles of line were laid in the month of August; the rail-head was now 165 miles from Halfa and only 85 miles from Abu Hammed; there was every reason to assume that the same rate of construction would be maintained. The assumption was verified by the event. In the course of another two months the line was completed to Abu Hammed, and preparations were commenced for extending it to Berber.

Our steamers now began to make reconnaissances as far as Metemmeh, which they subjected to a brisk bombardment during the closing days of October, and to which they continued to pay pretty constant attention for many weeks to come. Such operations as these were of less real importance than another event, not of a strictly warlike character, which took place nearer to the end of the year. This was the occupation of Kassala, as the result of diplomatic negotiations between the English and Italian Governments. Its strategic

value to us was great, for it lies at the head of the river Atbara, down which a force could easily be despatched to Berber; and it was the centre of a grain district which could support a large force of the enemy, and would thus have enabled them, at any rate, to threaten Berber whenever they pleased. If it had not been in the hands of the Italians we should certainly have had to send a force to capture it. It was satisfactory to be able to get it on easier terms, and just before Christmas the transfer was effected. Our advanced post had by this time been pushed forward to the junction of the Atbara with the Nile. An Egyptian brigade was established there, and had set to work to construct a fort, inside which were built huts for stores and men, and everything was done which was necessary to prepare the place to serve as the base for the final advance on Khartum.

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NILE AND ATBARA TO ILLUSTRATE OPERATIONS AGAINST MAHMUD.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE AVENGING OF GORDON

THE last year of this admirably planned and organised campaign had now dawned. Sir Herbert Kitchener's advanced post was at Ed Damer, about seven miles above the point at which the Nile receives its confluent, the Atbara. To his keen and far-reaching eye the end was doubtless already in sight. But not a chance was to be thrown away, not a single needless peril was to be risked. Warned by the threatening movements of the Dervishes in the neighbourhood of Dongola, the British commander applied at the beginning of 1898 for reinforcements, and the first two months of the year were spent in massing a powerful and well-equipped army for the final descent upon Mahdism.

At the beginning of March the advanced post was withdrawn from Ed Damer, which had been destroyed, and was established at Fort Atbara in the northern angle of the two rivers. Between that point and Berber, twenty-three miles north, was stationed the army with which it was proposed to meet the threatened attack of Osman Digna and Mahmud.

This threatened attack of Mahmud on the Anglo-Egyptian forces, however, became ultimately an attack of the Anglo-Egyptian forces upon Mahmud. His strength and his whereabouts were for the moment alike unknown. His force, for all they knew, might have numbered anything from 10,000 to twice that number. It was known that he had taken over his men from Metemmeh, which had hitherto been his headquarters, to join those of Osman at Shendy. De-

tachments of the latter, it was reported, had begun to drift northward, but whether this was really in preparation for an attack on Berber was at present in doubt. The Sirdar, however, took his own means of ascertaining the truth. Having been joined by the last detachment of his troops, who had made a magnificent forced march from Abu Dis, a distance of 118 miles, within four days, he struck his camp at Debeika on 12th March, and advanced up the Nile to Damarli, which he again quitted on the 16th of the month for Kenur, a few miles further up the river. Here he completed the concentration of his forces, and on the 20th March moved on to Fort Atbara, to which place, as above stated, his advanced guard had already been retired. At Kenur the Anglo-Egyptian army had received, and been overjoyed by, the report that Mahmud was before them on the Atbara river. He had seized Hudi ford, it was said, some seven miles from the junction of the two rivers, and to Hudi they were to push forward at once. They were doomed, however, to disappointment. Hudi was reached, and Ras-el-Hudi, a few miles further on, but not a Dervish was to be seen.

At Ras-el-Hudi the forces were chafing with impatience for nearly a fortnight. It was still impossible to locate the enemy, and the problem of maintaining a force of 13,000 men, who had left Kenur with the expectation of fighting the next day or the day after, was becoming a serious one. The really formidable enemy was not the Dervish but the Sudanese desert, and that foe had never been so formidable as now. That Mahmud and his army must be somewhere near was quite certain, for their cavalry was seen almost daily, and they were assuredly camped somewhere on the Atbara, for there was nowhere else whence they could obtain water. On the 27th of March a reconnaissance of the opposite bank of the Atbara was carried as high up as to Menawi, some 18 miles distant, but no trace of the Dervishes was to be discovered. At last, on the 30th March, General Hunter

went out with a force of cavalry, the horse battery, and four Maxims, while two battalions of infantry and a field battery were advanced to Khor Abadar to support him. He returned in the evening bringing with him the solution of the mystery. He had simply pushed on until he reached Mahmud's position: he had ridden up to within 300 yards of it, and looked in. Mahmud was at Nakheila, 18 miles away, encamped in a position facing the open desert, and with the dry bed of the Atbara in its rear. Around it ran an impracticable-looking zariba, reported—though its size ultimately proved to have been exaggerated—to be three miles long, and within the circuit of the zariba was a triple trench, from which its defenders could deliver fire in three tiers upon an assaulting force. For the next two days the plans of the Sirdar remained a matter of speculation. He could hold his own position, of course, if he chose, and starve the Dervishes out. But there was the question of supplies to be considered, and the question of prestige. The prolonged victualling of a force 13,000 strong, and 17 miles from their base at Fort Atbara, by camel transport alone, was a work of the gravest difficulty; and even had it not been, the spectacle of so large a British force remaining inactive at a distance of only 18 miles from a barbarous enemy would be the reverse of edifying to the native mind. Again, a defeat of the Dervishes in the open field would go much further to demoralise them than their dispersal or retirement under pressure of starvation. Under the circumstances, therefore, the Sirdar resolved to attack.

On the 3rd April his forces quitted the scene of their weary wait at Ras-el-Hudi, and pushed on to Abadar. By the 5th they were at Umdabieh. There they rested a day, and on the evening of the 7th, Maundy Thursday, they were to start for their last march before closing with the enemy. At six o'clock the order was given to advance, and the troops issued from Umdabieh, and set out in the gathering darkness in the direc-

tion of Mahmud's camp. At a little after four they halted for a couple of hours' sleep. By six on the morning of Good Friday they were within a mile and a half of the enemy's position; at 6.20 A.M. the attack commenced. The artillery opened fire on the Dervish zariba, and a fierce and destructive cannonade was kept up, the Dervishes replying but feebly. Their cavalry formed up on their right, and made as though they would charge; but the fire of the Maxim was too hot, and they retired again within their defences. At length, after the gunners had been busy for an hour and twenty minutes, the artillery was silent; the order was given for an advance along the whole line, and the Anglo-Egyptian force of 12,000 pressed sternly and steadily forward towards the stronghold on their front. Maxwell's brigade, consisting of the 12th, 13th, and 14th Sudanese and the 8th Egyptian, was on the right; next to it marched General Macdonald with the 9th, 10th, and 11th Sudanese; the centre attack was made by the British brigade, having the Camerons in line along its whole front, with the Lincolns, Seaforths, and Warwicks behind them; while in the left rear was Lewis's three-battalion brigade, consisting of the 3rd, 4th, and 7th Egyptians.

The Camerons led the advance, and were the first of the British troops—if indeed they did not run a dead-heat with the Seaforths—to force the position. Halting on the top of a ridge only 300 yards from the zariba, they poured into the Dervish camp a deadly volley, to which its defenders vigorously responded. Then rushing forward till they reached the zariba, they halted before its apparently impenetrable hedge; and then it was seized, plucked up, dashed down, scattered aside, and the Highlanders—Seaforths mingling with the Camerons—poured in through yawning gaps, and all was a *mêlée* of charging British and flying and firing, and again flying and firing, Dervishes. The slaughter within the inclosure was hideous; for by this time the Lincolns had forced their way in on the right, and the Maxim battery, galloping up

close to the stockade, were strewing the enemy's left with their dead. Onward and onward the assailants pressed, clearing the ground of every living man as they went; onward till they had bayoneted their way through the whole encampment, and stood on the high bank of the Atbara behind it. But all was not over yet; for as the wretched fugitives scrambled down into the sandy river-bed in the attempt to escape, they were cut off and laid low in heaps by the men of Lewis's brigade, who had skirted the camp on the left, and reached the bank of the Atbara before them. To the native troops, Sudanese and Egyptian, belonged, it was believed, the honour of being the first into the Dervish camp, their line formation favouring them. Their loss was heavier, for their firing was less deadly than that of the Camerons; but they never wavered, and their pluck and steadiness afforded a new proof of the completeness of their military education, and redounded to their credit, and to the credit of those British instructors who had patiently and skilfully fashioned them into soldiers. The engagement lasted forty minutes only, but it was the most decisive that had yet been fought—the direst blow to Mahdism that had as yet been delivered. The British killed numbered but 24, and their wounded 104; the Egyptian and Sudanese losses were heavier. But it is computed that the enemy left more than 3,000 dead on the field of battle, among them nearly all their Emirs, including Wad-el-Bishara, who was governor of Dongola in 1896. Mahmud himself was taken prisoner by some men of the 10th Sudanese. But apart from their actual losses by shell and bullet and bayonet, the results to Mahmud's army were overwhelmingly disastrous, and the event bore testimony to the strategic wisdom of the Sirdar in giving battle to the Dervishes at this particular spot. Had he closed with Mahmud on the Nile, the defeated army could have escaped up the stream. Had he done so on the Atbara nearer to its confluence with the Nile, it would still have been possible for fugitives to make their way across the narrow apex of the

desert triangle to the greater river. But a Dervish from Nakheila would have to cross 30 miles of desert before he could reach water, and there can be little doubt that few of those who escaped death on that desperate Good Friday lived to tell the tale. The Sirdar had not only routed, he had practically annihilated Mahmud's army.

The summer months of "high Nile" were spent, of course, in enforced inactivity, and even by the end of August there were no marked signs of any change in the military disposition of the Sirdar. His headquarters had been moved to the Atbara, in order that he might give his personal supervision to transport operations at that point; but his numerical strength remained much the same as that with which he had encountered Mahmud, the two additional brigades not having yet arrived at the front.

The force destined for the advance to Omdurman consisted of two infantry divisions, one British and one Egyptian; one regiment of British, and ten squadrons of Egyptian cavalry; one field and one howitzer battery, with two siege guns of British, and one horse and four field batteries of Egyptian artillery, beside both British and Egyptian Maxims; eight companies of camel corps; the medical service and the transport corps; and six fighting gunboats, with eight transport steamers and a host of sailing-boats. The Egyptian infantry division, now numbering four, instead of three brigades, was commanded by Major-General Hunter, the first, second, and third brigades being constituted as in the Atbara campaign.

The British division was under the command of General Gatacre. Of its two brigades, the first was still in summer quarters, the headquarters staff, with the Camerons, Seaforths, and Maxim battery, being at Damarli, and the Lincolns and Warwicks at Es-Sillem. The second brigade, its four battalions consisting of the 1st Northumberland Fusiliers, the 2nd Lancashire Fusiliers, the 2nd Rifle Brigade, and the 1st

Grenadier Guards, had not, by the beginning of August, come up from Egypt. The ten squadrons of Egyptian cavalry had concentrated during the last week of July on the western bank, opposite Atbara; the 21st Lancers, bringing the total cavalry strength to about 1,500, were still expected from Cairo.

By the beginning of August all was in readiness for the advance, and on the 3rd of the month the six Sudanese battalions left Fort Atbara for the point of concentration at Wad Habashi. Immediately after their departure the two new brigades began to arrive, the headquarters and the first four companies of the Rifle Brigade being already in camp before the steamers were under way. Their journey from Cairo had been a miracle of expedition, and a wonder among masterly feats of organisation. The contrast which it presented with the painful experience of fourteen years before is set forth in so striking and animated a fashion by the brilliant author of "With Kitchener to Khartum," that it is impossible to deny oneself the pleasure of quoting the passage from Mr Steevens's book in its entirety:—

To transport 5,000 men, 600 horses, two batteries with draught cattle, and two siege guns some 1,300 miles along a line of rail and river within four weeks, is not, perhaps, on paper, a very astounding achievement. But remember last time we came the same way. Remember 1884—the voyageurs and the Seedee boys, the whalers, and the troopers set to ride on camels and fight on foot, and all the rest of the Empire-ballet business—the force that left Cairo about the time of year these were leaving, that began to leave Halfa at the opening of September and struck the Nile at Metemmeh late in January, while most of it never got beyond Korti. It is exactly the difference between the amateur and the professional.

Remember, furthermore, that the railway from Luxor to Assuan, and the railway from Halfa to the Atbara are both quite new: at home, with every engineering facility which is lacking in the Sudan, a new line is allowed a few months' trial to settle and mature before heavy traffic is run over it. The track is single, the engines are many of them old, the native officials are all of them incapable. The steamers are few and in great part old. The wind for the sailing-boats was mostly contrary. The country is a howling red-hot depopulation. Yet every arriving vessel wa

now merely up to its time, but a little before it. It wanted for nothing by the way, and when it arrived found provision for just three times as long as it was likely to need it.

And all the time, remember, just the same thing was going on up the river. While the trains were bringing the British, the boats were taking the blacks. The gyassas sank their low waists awash with the Nile-flood under groaning loads of supplies; the streets of boxes and sacks at the Atbara never seemed to grow less, but similar streets were rising at Nasri Island. Above us the bank was being stacked with wood for the steamers; below us Egyptian battalions were hauling at more boats to take more supplies forward. All one steady pull along a rope 1,300 miles long—a pull without a stumble, without a slack. And the Sirdar ran his eye along the whole tension of it, knowing every man's business better than he did himself—only furious because the wind was south or west instead of north. He was not accustomed to such luck, and he did not deserve it. But neither did he succumb to it. The sailing-boats went south all the same. The Sirdar told them to go south; and, somehow, tacking, towing, punting—Allah knows how!—south it was.

There was, indeed, all the difference here between the professional and the amateur, though it is, of course, only fair to remember that the amateurishness of the amateur of 1884 was aggravated by the fact that the delays of his dilatory employers compelled him to extemporise and to experiment, two processes which are hazardous enough even for the professional, and with the amateur are likely to be disastrous. In other words, it should not be forgotten that Lord Wolseley had hardly more months to organise his advance upon Khartum than Sir Herbert Kitchener had years; and it is perhaps the highest testimony to the great qualities of the Sirdar that, having years to do his work in, he had the patience and self-control to take years in doing it.

He was now making his final dispositions with all the skill and forethought which had characterised them throughout. A force of about 23,000 men, which less than a month before had been strung out between Cairo and the Atbara, was by the 27th of August concentrated at Wad Hammed and at a camp about 10 miles further on with but one mishap—the wreck of a gunboat, which had been so strained by towing

heavy barges, that its plates suddenly opened, and it sank. Before them lay the Shabluka Cataract, up which the flotilla had to force its way with every probability of finding it commanded by the Dervishes. They had built cunningly devised forts on the water's edge, at the narrower part of the defile, and these it would have been impossible for the gunboats to pass. They could, however, be rendered untenable by our occupation of the hills overlooking them, and this fact, no doubt, was the cause of their abandonment by the enemy.

A reconnaissance by the cavalry and gunboats having shown that the whole of the Shabluka Pass, some twenty miles long, was clear of Dervishes, both on the water's edge and on the hills above, the boats were sent forward with supplies to make a depôt at Jebel Royan, an island near the southern end of the Cataracts, while the Egyptian army moved forward and camped on the bank opposite. The island was within forty miles of Omdurman, and was to be the last depôt. A hospital was established there, and it was there that the force was for the first time camped all together. It now consisted, all told, of eight battalions of British infantry, one regiment of British cavalry, a company of Engineers, a field battery, a howitzer battery, a Maxim battery, and two forty-pounders, sixteen regiments of Sudanese and Egyptian infantry, eight squadrons of Egyptian cavalry, one horse artillery battery and four mule batteries, and the camel corps.

On the 28th August the Egyptian army left the camp at Jebel Royan, and marched 10 miles, the British division following in the afternoon. The whole force was halted the next day in consequence of a violent sand-storm, though the work of bringing up the supplies still proceeded, the steamers going back and towing up the sailing-boats. On the next day the march was resumed, and by the 31st August the Sirdar had brought his army to within about 8 miles of Kerreri ridge, or about 15 or 16 from Omdurman. Here again it was expected that they would encounter resistance. The Der-

visions, according to the general anticipation, would contest their advance at some point before reaching Omdurman itself, and Kerreri ridge seemed a more likely position than any other to be selected. But the eager warriors were again destined to be disappointed. The ridge was unoccupied, and the troops climbed it unmolested. They had hoped to have a view of their goal from its summit, but Omdurman was too far distant to be clearly descried. Nothing was visible but the big white dome of the Mahdi's tomb, gleaming through the desert haze.

On their left, however, they saw a sight better worth seeing—the gunboats steaming up to bombard Omdurman; while on the right front the cavalry could be seen working round to the west of the town to reconnoitre it. Below them on the river bank lay the village of Agaiga, the position which the Sirdar had selected at which to halt his force. They were preparing to bivouac when they caught the welcome boom from the gunboats and howitzers, the latter of which had been disembarked on Tuli Island. Then began that well-directed cannonade which had so vastly important an influence on the subsequent movements of the Dervishes, and thereby on the event of the campaign.

The enemy replied to the British fire as best he could, but his reply was ineffectual. Good marks as the gunboats were, these artillerists of the desert failed to hit them. Hulled by a single shell, a gunboat would in all probability have gone to the bottom; but though the Dervish gunners occasionally got home on their superstructure, they received no disabling shot. Meanwhile, our own shooting was too good for the Omdurman forts, and one after another their guns were dismounted by our shells passing through the embrasures.

This bombardment of Omdurman was, in reality, one of the most important of the determining factors in the final event of the struggle; for it was this which drew the Khalifa and his Dervishes to their ruin. It apparently forced him, or at least was partially instrumental in forcing him, to the adoption

of a particular course of strategy which can only be described as suicidal. It is believed by those most competent to judge, and indeed is generally allowed, that had Abdullahi and his army been content with merely "sitting light"—that is to say, had they remained in their position and simply awaited attack—our victory would at once have been infinitely more costly, and considerably less decisive. They could not have been dislodged save at the expense of a very serious loss of life on the part of the attacking force; and the capture of their position would not have been attended with the wholesale slaughter and the demoralising rout of the enemy which were the results of the battle as actually fought. That the Khalifa did lead his men so precipitately out into the open must have been mainly due to his recognition of the fact that the gunboats were rapidly making Omdurman too hot to hold him; though for his selection of the time and conditions of sallying forth he had apparently only to thank his own military ineptitude. He had the choice of making a night-attack, and the Sirdar fully expected that he would do so. Had he and his troops advanced with the same determination which they showed in the daytime, it is most probable that they would have reached our lines, and that a hand-to-hand fight would have ensued. Owing to the darkness, the Anglo-Egyptian forces could not have fired with any effect until the enemy were within 200 yards, and with so short a distance for their overwhelming numbers to traverse, it would have been difficult to stop them.

But this obvious method of making the utmost use of their numerical superiority was for some reason or other neglected. On the afternoon of the 1st September they contented themselves with a mere cavalry demonstration, which effected nothing, not even—thanks to the counter-manœuvres of our own cavalry—enabling them to observe the dispositions of our forces. It was followed by their retirement within the walls of Omdurman. In anticipation of this night-attack, and to foil the

project if it should be contemplated, the Sirdar adopted the ingenious expedient of sending spies into the enemy's camp in the pretended *rôle* of deserters, to inform the Khalifa that the Anglo-Egyptian army were going to take the initiative of making a night-attack themselves. At 3.30 A.M., the hour before dawn being most in favour for this particular warlike operation, the whole force noiselessly stood to arms. The night, however, passed quietly, and about 5.30 A.M. our infantry were moving out to an assault upon the Dervish position, when, to their surprise and delight, the news came that the Dervishes were advancing to attack. It seemed too good and too foolish to be true. No one ever dreamed that these brave fanatics, contemptuous of death as they were, would ever commit an act of such insane rashness as to attack us in the open by daylight. What most of the older hands had expected was that they would have to sit down and bombard Omdurman for two days, and then to go on with the bayonet, and of course to lose heavily in the house-to-house fighting through the streets of the town.

Whence came the suggestion of this madly foolhardy strategy on the part of the Dervishes it is impossible to do more than conjecture; but it has been suggested, plausibly enough, by one of the many historians of the campaign, that the battles of Abu Hammed and Atbara had persuaded the Khedive that it was fatal for his troops to act on the defensive and reserve their fire for close quarters. Fugitives from these battles had told him that they had reserved their fire so long that they had not had time to kill us before we reached them; and this had determined the Khalifa to come out into the open, to begin firing at long range, and then, with the bravery of fanaticism, to overpower us with a rush.

Sir Herbert Kitchener, who no doubt had felt that, in the usual formula of the Roundhead commander whenever the enemy made a mistake, the Lord had delivered the Khalifa into his hand, was nevertheless not the man to throw away a chance

through any delicacy about co-operating with Providence. No sooner did he learn that the Dervishes were advancing, than he ordered his men back into the strong position which they had just quitted. Spare ammunition was placed behind them, three gunboats were drawn up enfilading the front face, and three more enfilading the rear face of the defensive force, the others being still busily engaged in bombarding Omdurman, thereby detaining some 5,000 Dervishes in that place. About 6.15 A.M. the shouts of the advancing force were heard, and presently the vast mass of our barbaric enemy were seen moving forward across the plain to the attack. The Egyptian cavalry, camel corps, and horse-artillery retired steadily before them, moving across our front so as not to mask our fire. The Dervishes came on with extraordinary rapidity, waving their flags and shouting their songs to Allah, till they had reached the Kerreri range of hills. At this point our artillery opened fire, and speedily began to make havoc in the Dervish ranks. Apparently the enemy had intended to delay the attack until their left had secured a flanking position on our right, but the movement was skilfully thwarted by the Egyptian cavalry, and the main body, finding the artillery far hotter than they could stand, would wait no longer, and rushed forward, firing as they ran, to the assault of our position. At 900 yards the First British and Second Egyptian Brigades opened fire. So deadly was the aim that the fusillade told visibly, even at that distance, and, in the words of an eye-witness, within 300 yards nothing could live. The fearless fanatics came on, however. They passed the limit of 300 yards, they got within 200, but, as a force, they got no further. A few struggled up to within 50 yards, and then dropped. One or two daring horsemen stood within 100 yards of our rifles, imploring their men to come on; but one by one they too fell, and the rush was checked. The main attack had failed, and with fearful loss to the attacking force.

Equally decisive had been the repulse of the attempt of

the Dervishes, 20,000 in number, to cut off the retreat of the cavalry and camel corps, who had held them occupied on our right. For a moment the position of these arms looked critical, but a gunboat was summoned to their assistance, and the diversion effected by their destructive fire enabled the camel corps to make their way back to the zariba; while the cavalry, after drawing off 10,000 of the Dervishes from the main attack, succeeded without difficulty in evading them. By 8.15 A.M the Dervish repulse was complete, and the time had come for the Anglo-Egyptian force to assume the offensive. It turned out to be the most critical operation of the day. The Dervishes who had come out into the open must be kept there, and not be allowed even to get back again to their position. The Sirdar, accordingly, ordered an immediate advance upon Omdurman, and it was in the course of this, and as a no doubt unavoidable consequence of the haste in which the movement had perforce to be executed, that the bulk of the Dervish forces were enabled to intercept the Sudanese and Egyptian brigade under Colonel Macdonald, who for upwards of two hours had to bear the brunt of an attack which their overwhelming numbers rendered most formidable. He handled his force, however, with admirable skill, and though his position was for some time one of the greatest danger, he was able to hold the enemy at bay until the arrival of relief, and after an obstinate struggle the Dervishes at last broke and fled. In another part of the field the 21st Lancers, a regiment which had never before seen active service, signalised their first engagement by the performance of a brilliant feat of arms. While moving rapidly westward to cut off the enemy's retreat, they suddenly came upon a body of from 2,000 to 3,000 Dervishes, hidden as a reserve in a depression of the ground. There was nothing for it but a charge, and the 300 men rode down upon the 2,000 with much the same reckless gallantry as that with which the Light Brigade at Balaklava charged the Russian guns. They literally cut their way

through the serried masses of the enemy, formed up on the other side, and, opening fire with their carbines, ultimately chased the enemy completely off the ground. The main purpose, however, of the Sirdar's movement was completely achieved. By his advance he cut their forces in twain, and divided both of them from the Khalifa and Omdurman, so that each had to fight it out where it stood, or else to fly to the desert. There could be but one result of the encounter. Time after time the Dervishes had hurled themselves in vain against us; their whole force had failed to overwhelm one brigade, and now they saw our entire army advancing in line, elated and confident; thousands of their bravest lay dead upon the field, their leaders had seen the day was lost, and, after the manner of Dervish leaders, had fled. No wonder that the rank and file had had enough of it. They slowly and sullenly gave way, and cavalry charges soon converted their retreat into a rout. At 11.50 A.M. our infantry halted, and the battle was won. It had lasted more or less continuously for four hours. The Khalifa's body-guard fell to a man round the black flag; the Khalifa himself had fled. In answer to Slatin Pasha's eager enquiries for his old enemy's whereabouts, he was told by a wounded Dervish that he had made his escape on a swift camel ten minutes before.

The enemy's resistance being now completely broken, the Sirdar pushed on with all speed to Omdurman. There were still some 5,000 Dervishes, and, unless the town could be speedily reached, the news of their leader's defeat might get to them and warn them to prepare for defence. Leaving Lewis's and Macdonald's brigades on the field to collect and succour the wounded, General Kitchener hurried onward, and in spite of all remonstrances insisted on riding at the head of the brigade as they approached Omdurman. The Dervishes within her walls were to be divided by uncertainty; for though they knew the battle was lost, they preferred to die with arms in their hands, if die they must; and though the Sirdar had

sent a captured Dervish to promise them their lives if they would surrender, such acts of clemency were too uncommon in their experience of the ways of conquerors to be readily believed. It was here that the wisdom of the Sirdar's apparently reckless exposure of himself was demonstrated. Riding coolly into the town, he told the garrison that he would spare their lives if they would lay down their arms; and though, on the face of matters, the question seemed rather to be whether they would spare his life than he theirs, the moral effect of his quietly fearless action proved irresistible. The Dervishes knew that their cause was lost, and knowing that it was the Sirdar and not one of his brigadiers who was promising them their lives, they accepted his pledge with a confidence which they probably would not have reposed in that of a subordinate officer. They submitted, and laid down their arms; and except for a slight sputter of resistance from a couple of Baggara horsemen, who were promptly despatched, the crowning object of three years' warfare and many more years of preparation was achieved in the capture of Omdurman almost without firing a shot.

The Khalifa's house was, of course, the first to be visited; but its occupant had fled. The prisons were then thrown open, and the unfortunate Austrian trader Neufeld was released. By 5 P.M. the remaining brigades reached the north end of the town, and began to enter, though it was not till near midnight that the last of them had taken up its quarters; nor, of course, was it possible that night to count the cost of victory, though all knew that it had been cheaply won. The casualties on our side were about 500, of which some 150 represented deaths. Of the Dervishes, it was computed that quite 15,000 were actually killed. Officers sent out the next day counted 11,800 dead on the battle-field, and to these must be added those killed by the bombardment in Omdurman, and in the desert during pursuit. Several thousand men were wounded and taken prisoners. The remainder [illegible] laid

aside their arms and assumed the character of peaceful inhabitants. From local reports, and from estimates formed of their numbers from the distance which they covered when extended, it is believed by competent judges that the Dervish army which had taken the field on that eventful morning could not have been less than 50,000 strong.

Our last act in solemn commemoration of this crowning victory for humanity and civilisation remained to be performed. On the 4th September representatives of every regiment and corps were paraded at the site of Gordon's ruined palace at Khartum. A short thanksgiving service was held, and then amid an exchange of congratulations, in which the emotions natural to the occasion disturbed for the moment even the iron composure of the Sirdar, the National Anthem was sung, and over the scene of our hero's martyrdom, side by side with the colours of the sovereign whose subjects he had vainly striven to rescue, floated forth the flag of that country for whose sorely tarnished honour he had laid down his life.

# CHAPTER XII

## A DIPLOMATIC EPISODE

It is necessary at this point in the history of our work in Egypt to turn aside a moment for the review of a diplomatic episode which, although of the highest international significance, is systematically ignored by every adverse critic, whether English or foreign, of our Egyptian policy and position. When the foreign critic harps, as he does perpetually, upon what he calls our unfulfilled promises of withdrawal from the country, and when his English colleague faithfully re-echoes him, they are both of them either culpably ignorant, or cynically suppress the fact that if the British occupation of Egypt is existing at this moment in the form in which it originally commenced, and without any express international sanction, this is wholly and solely due to the action of a single European State, and that the State whose subjects protest the most loudly against our informal Protectorate. Hostile critics of that Protectorate, whether they be English or foreign, should refresh their memory of this circumstance if they happen to have forgotten it, and, if they remember, should have the honesty to notice and deal with it; although, indeed, for anybody save the hostile critic—who, of course, ought to be acquainted with the case of those whom he criticises—complete obliviousness of the whole business would be pardonable enough, for, in truth, in their intense pre-occupation with home affairs during the period now in question, it passed almost unnoticed by the British public.

Nevertheless, it remains the fact that in the year 1885 the Government which had just succeeded to power conceived the design—which during their subsequent tenure of office in 1887

they did their best to carry out—of putting the British occupation of Egypt upon such a footing of international consent as would for ever have silenced all objections from any quarter as to its irregularity and illegitimacy; and it also remains the fact that the sole cause of the failure of this design was that it met with an opposition from—of all nations—France. In all probability, it was a fortunate failure for the particular Government who devised and loyally laboured to carry out the scheme. But it was certainly not to save a British Administration and its party from tasting discredit and unpopularity that that opposition was offered.

It was, as has been said, in 1885 that this project had its inception. Lord Salisbury had just acceded to power. British influence in Egypt was still staggering under the shock of the abandonment of the Sudan and the sacrifice of Gordon. The reforms were not yet under way; the Egyptian "New Model" army was not yet in being. Baring had but recently begun his manful battle with the difficulties which in the end he so triumphantly overcame. The whole outlook was uncertain, and the position of England in Egypt, surrounded by hostilities and jealousies within and without, seemed perilously insecure. It may be, too, that the mere *regni novitas*—to say nothing of the unsatisfactory status of a stop-gap Government holding office with a minority, and on the eve of an appeal to new and enlarged constituencies whose opinions were absolutely incalculable—counted for something in their resolve. But anyhow, during his short tenure of office in 1885, Lord Salisbury conceived the idea of arriving at such an understanding with Turkey as would allay the intense and growing jealousy of the Porte at our presence in Egypt and diminish the hostility of France. It might, he thought, be possible to conclude an arrangement which, while providing for the maintenance and development of the reforms which we had set on foot, should, at the same time, reduce the amount and duration of British interference in the country.

In pursuance of this design Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was despatched to Constantinople as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sultan, "on a special mission having reference to the affairs of Egypt"; and in October 1885 he succeeded in concluding a preliminary Convention with the Turkish Foreign Minister, which in the following month was ratified by the high contracting parties. Under this Convention it was arranged that the Porte and Her Majesty's Government should respectively appoint an Ottoman and a British High Commissioner, whose business it should be, in concert with the Khedive, to re-organise the Egyptian army and to consider what change might be necessary in the civil administration of the country. The Ottoman High Commissioner was also to consult with the Khedive as to the best mode of pacifying the Sudan, while the British Commissioner was to be kept informed of the course of negotiations, so that any steps taken in pursuance of pacification should be executed in agreement with him as forming part of the general settlement of Egyptian affairs. But the gist of the Convention lay in the important stipulation that, as soon as the two High Commissioners should be assured of "the security of the position and the good working order and security of the Egyptian Government," they should report in that sense to their respective Governments, who would then consult as to the conclusion of a Convention regulating the withdrawal of the British troops from Egypt at a convenient period.

The two High Commissioners despatched to Egypt in accordance with the provisions of this instrument were Mukhtar Pasha on behalf of Turkey, and Sir Henry Drummond Wolff as the representative of England. Their investigations lasted rather more than a year, at the expiration of which period the former addressed a long report to his Government, while his English colleague returned home to render in person an account of his labours. The twelve months over which their inquiry extended had been fruitful [illegible] England.

Administrations had successively fallen, and two general elections had taken place. Lord Salisbury, however, was again in power, this time at the head of a powerful Unionist majority, and was possibly less disposed to regard with favour his policy of the preceding year. Nevertheless, he was of course pledged to it and bound to proceed with it, though little progress, it is true, had as yet been made towards its realisation. A special envoy despatched by the Khedive to enter into communication with the insurgent tribes had effected nothing; while the only scheme of military re-organisation which had thus far been drafted was one put forward by Mukhtar Pasha which Sir Henry Wolff had been obliged to reject as unworkable.

Nor did the difficult question as to the withdrawal of British troops show any prospect of approaching settlement. Sir Henry Drummond Wolff was again despatched to Constantinople, and this time with instructions setting forth the claims of British policy with such force and precision, and constituting so weighty a declaration of its fixed principles, that the document must be cited in full. The Sultan, wrote Lord Salisbury on the 15th January, 1887—

. . . . . is pressing the Government of Great Britain to name a day for the evacuation of Egypt, and in that demand he is avowedly encouraged by one, or perhaps two, of the European Powers. Her Majesty's Government have every desire to give him satisfaction on this point, but they cannot fix even a distant date for evacuation until they are able to make provision for securing beyond that date the external and internal peace of Egypt. The object which the Powers of Europe have had in view, and which it is also not less the desire of Her Majesty's Government to attain, may be generally expressed by the phrase, "the neutralisation of Egypt;" but it must be neutralisation with an exception designed to maintain the security and permanence of the whole arrangement. The British Government must retain the right to guard and uphold the condition of things which has been brought about by the military and large sacrifices of this country. So long as the Government of Egypt maintains its position, and no disorders arise to interfere with the administration of justice or the action of the Executive, it is highly desirable that no soldier belonging to any foreign nation should remain upon the soil of Egypt, except when it may be necessary to protect the Canal passage from one sea to another.

Her Majesty's Government would willingly agree that such a stipulation should, whenever the evacuation had taken place, apply to English as much as to any other troops; but it will be necessary to restrict this provision, as far as England is concerned, to periods of tranquillity. England, if she spontaneously and willingly evacuates the country, must retain a treaty right of intervention at any time, either when internal peace or external security should be seriously threatened. There is no danger that a privilege so costly in its character will be used, unless the circumstances imperatively demand it.

It is not, of course, to be supposed that the claim on the part of Great Britain to re-enter and re-occupy with her troops a portion of even the nominal territory of the Sultan could be otherwise than distasteful to the Ottoman Porte. It was not, however, from this quarter, strange as it may seem, that the opposition which proved fatal to the plan arose. After not much more than the usual pressure required to procure the assent of the Porte to any proposal whatever, Lord Salisbury's proposal was accepted at Constantinople. Four months of debate resulted at last in a definite understanding between Sir Henry Drummond Wolff and the Turkish Government, and was duly embodied in a Convention signed by both parties on the 22nd May, 1887.

And here for the first, and probably for the last time, a date was fixed for the retirement of British troops from Egypt. By the terms of this Convention it was agreed that they should be withdrawn at the end of three years, unless at that date the appearance of external or internal dangers should necessitate the postponement of the step, in which case retirement was to take place as soon as the danger had disappeared. Two years after their withdrawal the general supervision exercised by Great Britain over the Egyptian army was to cease, and thenceforward Egypt was to enjoy *sureté territoriale*, or, in other words, the inviolability of her territory was to be recognised and guaranteed.

The Convention, however, went on to authorise in certain cases a joint occupation of Egypt by Turkish and British

troops. This right was to arise if there should be reason to fear an invasion from without, or if order and security in the interior were disturbed, or if the Khedive of Egypt refused to fulfil his duties towards his suzerain or his suzerainty. In the same circumstance the British Government was authorised to send troops, and to take measures—with all the regard due to the right of the Sovereign Power—to avert these dangers, the troops of both Powers to be withdrawn as soon as the causes requiring their intervention should have ceased.

And last, but not least, the Convention went on to provide for fortifying this compact by an international sanction. Great Britain and Turkey were to invite first the great Powers, and then all the others who had made or accepted arrangements with the Khedivate of Egypt, to give their adhesion to the Convention; while annexed to the main document was an important declaration by the English Plenipotentiary that, in case during the three years allowed for the withdrawal of the troops the Convention should be still unaccepted by any of the great Mediterranean Powers, Great Britain would regard the state of things as an "external danger" justifying the postponement of evacuation.

Here, then, was a distinct and definite reply to the question with which French politicians—though not, indeed, French financiers—had been so persistently plying us for the previous five years. To the reiterated inquiry: "When are you going to leave Egypt?" we now answered in effect: "In 1890, if the country is then tranquil, and if you, on your side, will agree that in the event of our departure giving the signal either for a violent attempt on the part of Egyptian reactionaries to overthrow the administrative and financial system we have established, or for an endeavour on the part of any European Powers to seize upon the position we thus voluntarily vacate, we shall have a Treaty right of re-entering and restoring the *status quo ante exitum.*" The condition for which we here stipulated was so obviously reasonable, the privilege which we

claimed so necessary to the perpetuation of our work in Egypt, and—for the reason indicated in Lord Salisbury's above-quoted despatch—the risk of its abuse so slight, that the majority of the great Powers without any hesitation signified their willingness to accept it. Austria, Germany, and Italy were prepared to give their adhesion to the Convention, and not only so, but the representatives of these three Powers united their efforts with those of our Envoy to induce the Sultan to ratify the Treaty which his Ministers had signed. Nor can there be any doubt that, if France had been content with merely holding sullenly aloof, the imperial ratification would have been given; and it would have remained for the unassenting Power to consider during the next three years whether it would be wise to postpone indefinitely the execution of the Convention by indefinitely withholding its own adhesion to it.

But France did much more than hold sullenly aloof: she offered a most strenuous resistance to the more formal conclusion of the Treaty by the parties willing to be bound by it. Her ambassador was directed to expostulate in strong, and even threatening language with the Porte, and he was backed, according to invariable practice in such cases, by his Russian colleague. The two diplomatists worked with such effect on the mind of the Sultan that, in spite of the persuasion brought to bear upon him by the representatives of the other four Powers, he obstinately refused his assent to the Convention. For nearly a month after the date fixed for the ratification the British Plenipotentiary in vain awaited the return of Abdul Hamid to a wiser and more independent frame of mind; and it was not till the 15th July, 1887, that his continued stay at Constantinople having ceased to consist with the dignity of the Government by whom he was accredited, he was recalled to England.

What would have happened if France had assumed a different attitude and the Convention had been concluded is now, of course, only a matter of curious speculation. Judging from what has since happened, it would apparently not have had any very

lasting life. As it was, we know that the unconquered [illegible] Dervishes had waxed so insolent in their perpetual [illegible] Egypt and molestation of its people, that in 1889 we had to take the special military measures necessary to read them the stern lesson that they received at Toski. Inasmuch, therefore, as even the mere rumour of our contemplated departure would certainly have tended rather to stimulate than to repress their hostile activity, it looks now as if that step would have had to be postponed in consideration of one of the "external dangers" specified in the Convention; or, if not that, we should very speedily have had to exercise our right of re-entry under the provisions on that behalf. Possibly, too, the threat of "invasion from without" might have been appealed to by the Porte as a ground for the despatch of Turkish troops to Egypt, and have thus led to further complications. All this, however, is, and must always remain, purely conjectural, though undoubtedly it affords additional reason for congratulating ourselves that the project of the Convention fell through.

By what particular motives France was actuated in her successful opposition to it is her own secret, which is never likely now to be shared with any one else. It may be that, with the national tendency to attach more importance to form than fact, the then French Government resented the idea of according even an *ex post facto* recognition of our previous status in Egypt by accepting it as the preamble, so to speak, of a formal international agreement; but if so, it was surely laying a rather pedantic stress on diplomatic proprieties and on their imaginary influence over the realities. To the ordinary mind, at any rate, the attitude of our neighbours in the matter is, and always has been, incomprehensible. Here in England we have never been able to see what France could possibly have lost by a Convention which would have secured, at any rate, an early evacuation of Egypt by the British forces, and could not, even if the worst had happened, have placed her in any less favourable position for protesting against our return than that she now occupies as objector to our continuance in the country.

That, however, is her affair. Our concern with it is now limited to this; that since it suited France to oppose and defeat our arrangement by virtue of which, if it had been concluded, we might have evacuated Egypt nearly a decade ago—and even if we had had to return, should have come back again as the recognised and treaty-bound mandatory of Europe—she has now morally forfeited all right of complaint against the prolongation of our stay in the country. We ought to be much more persistent than we are in reminding those who are apt to lend too ready an ear to French animadversions on our conduct in Egypt, that it is now nearly ten years since we attempted to free ourselves from our entanglement in Egyptian affairs by an effort so vigorous, not to say violent, that its success would, in the opinion of many high authorities, have endangered the durability of her constructive and regenerative work. In other words, in our haste to conciliate those who objected to the English scaffolding around the edifice of reform, we were prepared to run no inconsiderable risk of bringing the whole structure to the ground. That may not have been good policy; but it was certainly pretty strong evidence of good faith.

## CHAPTER XIII

### L'AFFAIRE MARCHAND

SCARCELY had the overthrow of the Khalifa's power and the rescue of the Upper Nile from his barbarous domination been thus effected, when the Sirdar received the very grave news that the freedom of the river was threatened from another and more formidable quarter. The expedition to Khartum had, indeed, justified the policy which had really, though not ostensibly, inspired it. To sweep the savagery of Mahdism from the path of Egypt would, it is true, have been an adequate object enough for the advance into the Sudan; but such a purpose, beneficent as it was, was not particularly urgent in 1896.

What really pressed was the necessity, not of crushing Eastern barbarism, but of anticipating Western ambition. It was to forestall the movements of France across the African continent from west to east, towards the head-waters of the Nile, that we had set out nearly three years before to force our way to the same point, through all difficulties of desert and Dervish, by a southward route. And now it seemed for a moment as if the curse of 1884 and 1885 still rested upon us, and that we should once more have to write the history of a costly and laborious expedition in the words "Too late!"

It was a curiously "near thing," too. The Sirdar, as has been said, had hardly had time to make good the occupation of Omdurman when he learnt that only a day or two before the battle the Khalifa had received news that a military force under a European commander had occupied

He at once sent two steamers up the White Nile to ascertain the truth of the report; and one of these boats returned on the 7th September to find Omdurman in the hands of the Sirdar, to whom the captain at once surrendered. Fashoda, he reported, was in the hands of a white force; his boat had been heavily fired on, and escaped with difficulty. Subsequent information tended to confirm the belief that the force at Fashoda was French, and the bullets found in the hull of the steamer were believed to be those of the French rifle. Sir Herbert Kitchener acted with his usual promptitude. He immediately quitted Omdurman with two gunboats and a force of 2000 men, and, on arriving at Fashoda, found it, as had been reported, in the occupation of Major Marchand and his troops, consisting of some 100 Senegalese soldiers, with eight French officers. The meeting of the representatives of the two great Western Powers in this remote region—the clash of their secular rivalries at this furthest limit of the ancient country for the control of which they had so long competed—is one of the most dramatic incidents in modern history; and the interview between the two men was marked by a certain chivalrous courtesy which impressed itself, as he afterwards admitted, even on the unromantic mind of Sir William Harcourt himself.

After due exchange of salutations between the British and French commanders, the Sirdar informed Major Marchand of his intention to occupy Fashoda in the name of its lawful owner, the Khedive of Egypt. To this Major Marchand replied, as of course he was in duty bound to do, that he was there under the orders of his Government, and that he could not consent to haul down the French flag. With his overwhelming superiority of strength, it would naturally have been an easy matter for the Sirdar—as it would have been well within his right as commander of the Khedive's army—to have taken possession of the place by force; but the Sirdar, whose diplomatic tact and discretion were equal to his military

skill, very wisely refrained from an act which, if it did not actually precipitate a war between the two Powers, would certainly have fatally compromised the prospects of a pacific issue of subsequent negotiations between them. He contented himself with hoisting the British and Egyptian flags beside that of France, and having placed a garrison at Sobat, a post still further south on the banks of the Nile, he returned to Omdurman.

The crisis was undoubtedly grave. To appreciate its gravity, it is only necessary to recall the situation, as established by Anglo-French diplomacy, which the presence of Major Marchand at Fashoda so rudely disturbed. France having definitely arranged her frontier with the Congo State by a boundary agreement of 1894, and having in her Convention of a later date with Great Britain adjusted and defined the other interests of the two nations in the region of the Niger, was left with a vast but vague sphere of influence, the boundaries of which towards the Central Sudan were necessarily undefined. While recognising in principle the reserved rights of Egypt in the provinces of the Sudan formerly under Egyptian rule, France repudiated her claim to enforce those rights by the campaign of reconquest which was then proceeding, in so far as such re-occupation should, directly or indirectly, benefit Great Britain. And by way of creating "accomplished facts" of conquest on her own part, she had within the last seven or eight years despatched no fewer than three expeditions to the eastward. The first was sent off immediately after the Anglo-German Convention of 1890. The second—a large military expedition under Colonel Monteil—was sent out after the Anglo-Congolese Convention of 1894, and the French Government enthusiastically granted the funds. The third was the Marchand Mission proper. Both Marchand and Liotard were instructed to advance into the Bahr-el-Ghazal, towards Fashoda, where Prince Henri d'Orléans was to join hands from Abyssinia. Marchand was instructed to hold Fashoda

against all comers. On representations from the British Government Monteil was recalled; but in spite of the plainly-worded warning of our Foreign Office, conveyed in a phrase which has a well-known and extremely serious diplomatic meaning, the other two missions were proceeded with. It had been intimated to the French Government—Sir Edward Grey told the House of Commons, in March 1895—that any attempt on the part of France to steal a march upon Egypt would be regarded by us as "an unfriendly act." Nevertheless, as has been said, the expeditions went forward. French posts were established in the Bahr-el-Ghazal at Tamluza, Kodjali, and other places, and the first-named of these posts was occupied by Liotard in February 1896. The "unfriendly act" was definitely committed by Marchand in the occupation of Fashoda in the autumn of 1898.

The Sirdar returned to England to report. Lord Salisbury, in moderate but firm language, insisted on the withdrawal of France from Fashoda as an indispensable condition of our assent even to negotiate upon the matter, and an acute state of tension prevailed for some weeks between the two nations. The British position was in reality impregnable; it could not even be attacked, save from the standpoint of the untenable contention that the dominions abandoned by Egypt in 1884 became so much derelict territory which might be appropriated by the first comer. It was quite clear that the right of the sovereign of Egypt to reclaim and reconquer them had not suffered, and could not suffer any derogation by reason of the usurping Dervish occupancy; and of this right Great Britain was the fully and regularly appointed executor.

France, however, was for a time more inclined to give ear to the voice of Chauvinist sentiment than to that of reason. The matter dragged on, and Great Britain had no choice but to arm. Naval preparations were pushed forward on this side of the channel with all speed. The negotiations between London and Paris had been carried on, of course, in a

dignified and, on both sides, in an outwardly conciliatory spirit. It was a great advantage to us to be represented by a Foreign Minister for whom Continental statesmen entertain so cordial a respect as they do for Lord Salisbury, by one whom they justly regard as a sincere friend of peace, and as to whom they entertain the perfectly well-founded belief that his high position, representing as it does the summit of every imaginable ambition that even the greatest of Englishmen could obtain, removes from him all temptation to risk the danger of war in any attempt at the advancement of his fame. To be represented by such a statesman is indeed a double advantage; it not only conciliates, but restrains—not only encourages a foreign minister to meet the English Government in an amicable spirit, but also warns him that where he finds such a man inflexible and resolved to resist certain demands in the last resort by an appeal to arms, war will be certain if they are pressed.

And it was of the first importance that such a warning should be brought home to the French Government in the present instance, for the demands which they at first put forward were plainly inadmissible. Established as they were at Fashoda as mere trespassers—for that was the correct legal description of their occupancy—they sought, in the lawyer's phrase, "to take advantage of their own wrong," by attempting to bargain with us for their withdrawal. They urged that their claim upon the Bahr-el-Ghazal should, in right of their exploration of the valley as a derelict province of Africa, be acknowledged by the British Government; and offered in return for such acknowledgment to recall Major Marchand. No such demand could for a moment be conceded. Its concession would have been fatal to the Anglo-Egyptian contention that no part of the territory of the Khedive—and they included the Bahr-el-Ghazal—had ever become derelict at all; but that every portion of those territories which had ceased for a time to be in the Khedive's effective possession, had passed into that of the Mahdi, from

whom they had been reconquered. Nothing could have been more definite than the terms in which Lord Salisbury repudiated the French claims. Throughout his despatches to the British Ambassador there was evidence, from first to last, of a quiet but unalterable decision that the White Nile belongs to Egypt and Great Britain, and that Egypt and Great Britain having conquered the Mahdi, there could be no longer any question of their rights. These rights, moreover, it was pointed out, were admitted by France in 1895, so far as the Khedive was concerned, and our own share in them under protest. Alike, therefore, by ancient sovereignty, by more recent negotiation, and by the right of conquest, Fashoda was ours; and that being the case, there was nothing for it but for France to disown Major Marchand as "an emissary of civilisation," and to accept the more convenient theory of his mission—even if it did not exactly correspond with the recorded diplomatic facts—that he was an ardent and heroic explorer, whose achievements reflected honour on his nation, but who could not, on that account, be permitted to involve two great nations, and perhaps as a consequence the whole of Europe, in war. Lord Salisbury's steady, though courteous insistence on these points, the quiet activity of our naval arsenals and dockyards, and, above all, the manifest resolve of the whole nation to support the Government in the maintenance of our just rights even at the cost of war, had at last their due effect. The French Government gave way. Major Marchand left Fashoda, and returned to France, *via* Suakin and the Red Sea, to receive the well-deserved acclamations of his countrymen on his great feat of travel.

The war-cloud having been thus happily dispersed, it only remained for the two Powers to adjust their respective claims by peaceful negotiation. After some further interchange of views between London and Paris, an agreement was at last arrived at in March 1899. It was embodied in the form of a Joint Declaration appended to the original text of the fourth

Article of the Anglo-French Convention of the 14th June 1898. This Declaration ran as follows :—

(1) Her Britannic Majesty engages not to acquire either territory or political influence to the west of the line of frontier designated in the following paragraph, and the French Government engages not to acquire either territory or political influence to the east of the same line.

(2) The line of frontier shall start from the point where the boundary between the Congo Free State and French territory meets the water-parting between the watershed of the Nile and that of the Congo and its affluents. It shall follow in principle that water-parting up to its intersection with the 11th parallel of north latitude. From this point it shall be drawn as far as the 15th parallel in such a manner as to separate in principle the Kingdom of Wadai from what constituted in 1882 the Province of Darfur ; but it shall in no case be so drawn as to pass to the west beyond the 21st degree of longitude east of Greenwich (18° 40′ east of Paris), or to the east beyond the 23rd degree of longitude east of Greenwich (20° 40′ east of Paris).

A glance at the map will show that in this agreement with France Great Britain obtained all that she ever claimed on behalf of herself and Egypt, namely, recognition of the unity and integrity of the Nile Valley. It completes the long series of agreements by which the entire valley of the Nile, except towards Abyssinia, is delineated or recognised as an Anglo-Egyptian sphere of influence, subject only to certain well-known reservations as regards political status. It is the last, but not the least, of the title-deeds to the Nile Valley under which the identity of British and Egyptian interests is clearly indicated.

Prior to this, however, the Anglo-Egyptian situation itself had required to be regularised, and in January 1899 an agreement was concluded between the two Governments providing under certain specified conditions, and within certain prescribed limits, for an Anglo-Egyptian *condominium* in the Sudan. In Article I the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan is defined as including

all the territories south of the 22nd parallel of latitude which either (1) have never been evacuated by Egyptian troops since the year 1882; or (2) having before the late rebellion in the Sudan been administered by the Government of His Highness the Khedive, were temporarily lost to Egypt, and have been reconquered by Her Majesty's Government and the Egyptian Government acting in concert; or (3) may hereafter be conquered by the two Governments acting in concert. By Article II it was provided that the British and Egyptian flags should be used together both on land and water throughout the Sudan, except in the town of Suakin, in which the Egyptian flag alone is to be used. Article III declares the supreme military and civil command in the Sudan to be vested in one officer, termed the Governor-General of the Sudan. In pursuance of this agreement the British and Egyptian flags were duly hoisted together at, among other places, Khartum, the seat of Government, and Wady Halfa, the northern limit; and a Khedivial decree of the 19th of January appointed the Sirdar Governor-General of the Sudan.

His precise position in relation to the recovered province and its inhabitants was defined by Lord Cromer in a speech of the highest importance, delivered by him in January 1899 to the assembled Sudanese Sheikhs and Notables at Omdurman. In the course of the address the British Consul-General said :—

I am glad to meet you all here to-day, in order to congratulate you on having been freed from the tyranny of Dervish rule by the military skill of the Sirdar and his officers, and the gallantry of the British and Egyptian troops. You see both the British and the Egyptian flags floating over this house. This is an indication that for the future you will be governed by the Queen of England and the Khedive of Egypt. The sole representative in the Sudan of both the British and Egyptian Governments will be the Sirdar, in whom both the Queen and the Khedive have the fullest confidence. No attempt will be made to govern the country from Cairo, still less from London. You must look to the Sirdar alone for justice and good government, and I do not doubt that you will have no cause for disappointment.

The Queen and her Christian subjects are devotedly attached to their

own religion, but they also know how to respect the religion of others. The Queen rules over a larger number of Western subjects than any sovereign in the world, and these live contented under her beneficent rule. Their religion and their religious customs are strictly respected. You may feel sure that the same principle will be adopted in the Sudan. There will be no interference whatever in your religion.

At this point one of the Sheikhs present asked whether this engagement included the application of the Mohammedan Sacred Law—a question which, to the extreme satisfaction of all present, was answered in the affirmative. Continuing his speech, Lord Cromer said :—

I am aware that many abuses occurred under the old Egyptian *régime* in the Sudan. No law courts worthy of the name existed ; taxes were heavy in amount, and illegal exactions in excess of taxes were of frequent occurrence. You need be under no fear that these abuses will be repeated. You doubtless have heard that the Egyptian Government of the present day is animated by a very different spirit from that existing in former times. I trust before long it will be possible for the Sirdar to institute some simple law courts in which equal justice will be distributed to all, rich and poor alike. You will, of course, have to pay taxes, but they will be moderate in amount and fixed according to ancient custom, which is very similar in all Western countries. You may feel sure that when once you have paid the amounts legally due, no further irregular exactions will be made. A few English officers will be resident in each district in order to secure strict compliance with these principles.

You must not, however, expect the Government to do everything for you, but must also bestir yourselves. I trust you who are men of influence will use that influence in the cause of order and tranquillity, and especially that you will encourage those with whom you are brought in contact to resume the cultivation of their fields, which now can be carried on without fear of molestation. I hope before I come here again that it will be possible for the Sirdar to have allowed you to return to your old homes in the town of Khartum, which before long will be greatly improved.

I beg you to remember these words which I have spoken, and to repeat them to your countrymen. You may feel assured that they truly represent the principles whereby the Sirdar in the future will be guided in the administration of the Sudan.

The wisdom of administering it in this "Crown Colony" fashion—of giving it in fact a paternal "one-man Government"—is pretty sure to demonstrate itself before we go much

further. Indeed, we may already point for its demonstration to the attraction which the Sudan, under the Sirdar alone, is exerting over the British capitalist—or, at any rate, was doing so before the outbreak of the Transvaal war so disastrously paralysed all commercial enterprise.

Lord Kitchener's first act on arriving in England to receive his well-merited honour was to lay before the British public his scheme for the institution at Khartum of a Gordon College as a pledge that the memory of Gordon is still alive among us, and that his aspirations are at length to be realised. The conqueror of Khartum caught his countrymen in the right mood and at the right moment. Had they been in a less enthusiastic temper it is possible that they might have thought the scheme of the College premature at this early date, and perhaps they might have looked askance at the ambitious name of "college" itself. But Lord Kitchener, by an admirably judicious mixture of sentimental appeal and business-like "push," succeeded, even within the period of his short stay in England, in collecting the large sum which was required for starting the educational institution. At the same time he wisely wrote to the newspapers to reassure those whom the title of the new foundation might possibly have alarmed. Our system, he admitted, would need to be gradually built up. "We should begin by teaching the sons of the leading men, the heads of villages and the heads of districts. . . . The teaching in its earlier stages would be devoted to purely elementary subjects, such as reading, writing, geography, and the English language. Later, and after these preliminary stages had been passed, a more advanced course would be instituted, including a training in technical subjects specially adapted to the requirements of those who inhabit the valley of the Upper Nile. The principal teacher of the college would be British, and the supervision of the arrangements would be vested in the Governor-General of the Sudan. I need not add that there would be no interference with the religion of the people."

The pledge thus tersely given to the population of the Sudan is one which will have to be kept steadily in view by the representatives of Great Britain in dealing with the well-meaning but often dangerous enthusiasts for the propagation of Christianity, whose proselytising zeal is at once fired by the sight of a new unconverted population. All the Foreign Missions which were formerly engaged in missionary enterprise in the Sudan lost no time in making proposals to renew or extend their work. Next to the religious comes the humanitarian problem, and it will need equally delicate and discreet treatment. For though it is undoubtedly true that the extermination of Mahdism is the most crushing blow that has ever been delivered at the African slave-trade, it must not be inferred from this that the traffic can now be immediately stamped out. Gordon—who, it must be remembered, in his first Governor-Generalship of the Sudan controlled the same extent of territory, held the same position at important points of observation such as Fashoda and Gobat, and ruled then, as we shall do in future, over a country undisturbed by Dervish marauders—recognised, as did Baker before him, that the extirpation of the slave-trade must be a gradual, organic process. Lord Cromer in his Report for 1899 has described the present situation of the matter with a clearness which will enable the British public to measure exactly what has been done and what remains to do, and will thus prevent them from either exaggerating or depreciating the amount of the gains which will accrue to humanity, in both senses of the word, from our Sudanese successes. "With the reconquest of the Sudan," says Lord Cromer, "a new chapter in the history of anti-slavery operations begins."

It has at last been found possible to strike a decisive blow at the main prop which holds up the institution of slavery. So long as slave raiders were free to roam about those provinces in Central Africa from which the slaves have heretofore been principally drawn, it was hopeless to expect that the supply could altogether be cut off. Means could always be found for trans-

sporting captured slaves to their ultimate destinations. These provinces have never fallen under the influence of an European Power, and, moreover, of that Power which, more than any other, has been distinguished for the zeal and interest which it has displayed in the anti-slavery cause. It would be difficult to exaggerate the importance of this achievement in connection with the effect which must ultimately be produced on slavery as an institution. What has heretofore been the chief recruiting ground for slaves is now closed to the slave raider. I do not say that slave-hunting operations will now no longer be possible, nor that all channels for the transport of slaves from the centre of Africa to the coast will be closed. Such, unfortunately, is not the case. Other provinces are still open to the slave raider. It is well known that an active trade in slaves exists between Wadai and the coast lying between Tripoli and Alexandria. The trade is fostered by the followers of Sheikh Senussi. At the same time, having regard to the blow which has now been struck, and to the further fact that the whole or the greater part of Africa appears to be gradually falling within the sphere of influence of one or other European Power, it is not too much to say that, for the first time in the history of anti-slavery operations, there seems to be some real prospect of final and complete success. Time will, without doubt, be required; but it is permissible to hope that under the influences now at work the next generation will see the almost entire extinction of the institution of slavery.

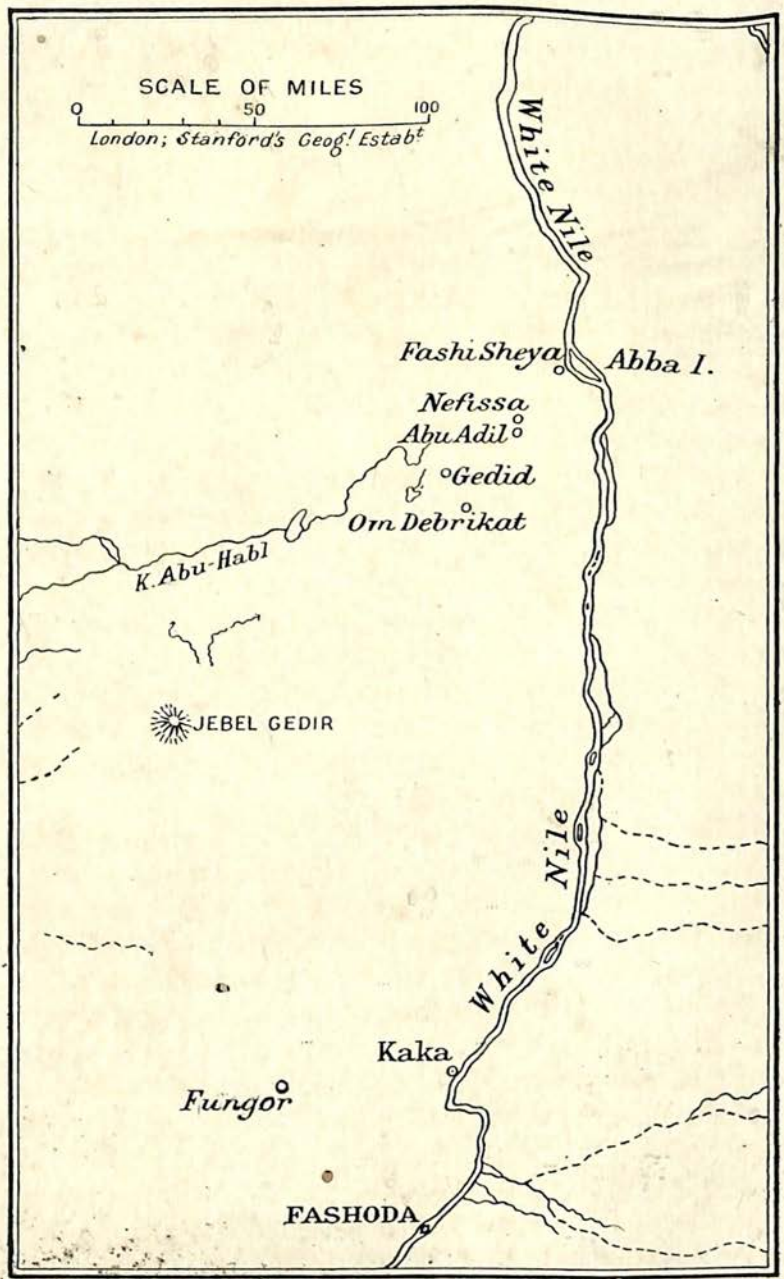
But he adds the caution, which our zealous abolitionists will do well to bear in mind, that

. . . . . Although there is every reason to believe that the slave trade in the Sudan is a thing of the past, domestic slavery will probably continue to exist for some while to come.

But after all, perhaps the most encouraging of all topics in connection with this subject is the one referred to in a Report of Colonel Stuart's, published as long ago as 1883, the writer of which observes:—

When all, however, is done that can be done, I look with more hope on the opening up of the country, and on the extension of legitimate trade, to bring slavery to an end, than on the most stringent treaties that can be devised; and I am convinced that no instrument will be more effective in bringing this about than a railway bringing Khartum within an easy distance of the sea.

More than a year had to elapse before the work of suppressing Mahdism was consummated by the death of the Khalifa.

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THE BRITISH MARCH TO OM DEBRIKAT.

The delay was unavoidable, because military operations on a large scale are impracticable in the western Sudan save in the months of October, November, and December, and these three months of 1898 had been too busily employed in gathering in the fruits of the victory of Omdurman, and in consolidating our position in the central Sudan, to say nothing of the Fashoda incident and its developments. The whereabouts and the movements of the Khalifa were still, however, a matter of considerable interest to the Sirdar; and a reconnaissance was made in January 1899, under Colonel Kitchener, with the view of locating our still defiant enemy. He was ascertained to be at Jebel Gedir; and thither in the first weeks of October an expedition was despatched. By the 19th of the month the Sirdar had concentrated a force of 7,000 men at Kaka, on the White Nile, some 400 miles south of Khartum, and not far from Fashoda. It consisted of horse, foot, artillery, and camelry, besides 900 transport camels—a very necessary adjunct to a force whose first march out in the direction of the Khalifa's camp was across a stretch of 50 miles of waterless country to Fungor, about 30 miles from the enemy's position. Water had to be carried in tanks, and husbanded with the greatest care.

Fungor was reached on the 23rd October, but here a bitter disappointment was in store for the expeditionary force. The Khalifa had disappeared from Jebel Gedir only a few days before. Pursuit in such a region was out of the question, and with many exclamations against their ill-fortune the men received orders to retrace the journey of 450 miles to Omdurman. Every one thought that, for that year at any rate, the game was up, and we should not again get a chance of coming to close quarters with the Khalifa until after the rains of September, 1900. The Sirdar left Omdurman for Cairo to discuss the military and Sudan Budgets with Lord Cromer, leaving Sir F. R. Wingate in command at Omdurman; and the garrison were just beginning to dismiss their own affairs

from their minds, and to concentrate their attention on the war telegrams from the Transvaal, when they received the astonishing and indeed almost incredible intelligence that the hitherto elusive Khalifa had suddenly changed his tactics, and was marching northward with his whole force to crush the infidel or perish in the attempt!

Naturally at first the rumour was discredited, but confirmation of it soon came in. News reached the camp of his having advanced half way from Kaka to Khartum, and finally on the 12th November his advanced party, under the Emir Ahmed Fedil, had actually got down to the river, and had fired volleys at the *Sultan*, our biggest gunboat. Early next morning two Sudanese battalions were sent up the White Nile to Abba Island, where they landed to reconnoitre, and were able without resistance to occupy the camp of Ahmed Fedil, who had abandoned it to retire inland. The Sirdar, having returned with all speed from Cairo, detailed a small force, of which he appointed Sir F. R. Wingate commander, to watch the Dervish advance, and to attack the enemy if a favourable opportunity should occur. The opportunity did occur, and the force and its commander made use of it.

Leaving Omdurman on November 13th for Fashi Sheya, their point of concentration on the left bank of the river opposite Abba Island, they quitted that post on the 21st, and early on the morning of the 22nd reached Nefissa, where Ahmed Fedil had been encamped the day before, and learnt that he had withdrawn his force in a southward direction, to a pool called Abu Adil. Sir F. R. Wingate immediately sent forward the cavalry, camel corps, Maxims, and irregulars, with orders to engage the enemy and hold firm to his position until the infantry arrived. About 10 A.M. the Maxims were planted on a hill overlooking Abu Adil at about 800 yards from the enemy's camp, upon which they opened fire. With their usual gallantry the Dervishes left their camp, made straight for the hill, which was bare of trees for about 100 yards from the base, and

desperately endeavoured to carry it. The 9th and 13th Sudanese arrived on the ground at this moment, but their aid was not required, for the Dervish rush had by that time been stopped for good by the fire of the guns, the foremost of their number being shot down within ninety-four paces. The two Sudanese battalions cleared out the Dervish camp with fixed bayonets, taking a few prisoners. Ahmed Fedil, with one or two of his principal Emirs, fled southwards to join the Khalifa's main body.

This, it was ascertained, was moving northward, in strength about 4,000, towards a place named Gedid, 24 miles south of the scene of that day's engagement. It was imperative for our troops to reach the wells at this place before the enemy; and, accordingly, at 11.45 P.M. on the night after the battle, they started off, marched through the whole of that night, and having reached their destination the next day and watered their thirsting animals and refreshed themselves, they resumed their march at midnight of the 23rd, and by 4 A.M. the next morning reached a grassy plateau overlooking the Khalifa's camp at a place named Om Debrikat. This time, at least, he was in earnest, for instead of keeping under the shelter of a hill as at Omdurman, he placed himself in the forefront of the battle, and his principal Baggara Emirs—some 15 or 20 in number, with the solitary exception of the continually skulking Osman Digna—dismounted from their horses, grouped themselves round their chief, and led the fighting men to the attack. It was, however, the same tragic story. At the proper moment Maxims and 12-pounders opened fire upon these devoted fanatics. Rifles joined in the chorus at 400 yards, and in the desperate charge the Khalifa and most of his Emirs met their death. Abdullahi, according to the subsequent account of one of his followers, was wounded by a bullet in the hand, but so determined was he to carry out the attack that he concealed the wound and went forward into the thick of the fight. He fell, struck by the splinter of a shrapnel in the mouth, and by a rifle bullet in the

chĕst. The body lay 330 yards from our firing line. By his side his chief Emirs, including Ahmed Fedil, lay dead or wounded. His son was taken prisoner. With his death the resistance melted away. Mahdism was no more, and the force got back on the 29th November to Omdurman, which they had only left on the 13th, having marched 61 miles in 61 consecutive hours, fought two decisive engagements, destroyed the Khalifa, his chief Emirs, and the last remnant of Dervishes, and brought back about 10,000 prisoners.

## CHAPTER XIV

### THE NATIONAL REASON WHY

ONE of the topics on which the Continental Anglophobe is fondest of descanting is the hypocrisy of England. He has a great deal to say, we know, about the aggressive spirit and the territorial greed of our foreign policy, but what shocks him most, he assures us, is the insincere professions with which we are accustomed to mask our nefarious designs. The accusation does not move us to anger—such is our "insular complacency" indeed, that few accusations of the foreigner ever do; but though we are no more irritated by this than by other charges, there is none, perhaps, to which we listen with so much secret surprise. If it is not more unjust than others with which we are familiar, it seems to us to surpass in sheer perversity all the rest. We are so conscious of meaning what we say at all times, whatever tricks the course of events may be fated to play with our words, that we are frankly incapable of comprehending how any reasonable person can suspect us of a deliberate intention of deceiving.

Those among us who have sufficient power of self-detachment to be able to put themselves for a moment in the place of our detractors will find, after reviewing the matter from that standpoint, that our surprise at the charge is sometimes little less unreasonable than the charge itself. Our consciousness of our own good faith is, after all, an advantage which they can hardly be expected to share with us; and, failing this, they naturally have no other means of estimating the moral quality of our foreign policy than by comparing the professions on which it is based with the consequences to which it leads; nor

can it in candour be denied that the result of such a comparison is occasionally a little startling. Take, for instance, the case of Egypt—that case which is cited perhaps more often than any other by our Continental censors in support of their criticisms. When, three-and-twenty years ago, Lord Beaconsfield purchased the Suez Canal shares, and the air became in consequence full of rumour and conjecture as to English designs upon the land through which our route to India lies, our statesmen with one voice, and our journalists with few exceptions, emphatically repudiated all such imputations. We protested in every formula of earnest asseveration that we had no other object in, or concern with Egypt than that of safe-guarding one important link in our communications with our Eastern dependency, and that, this assured, we should seek no exclusive influence in, or control over the country. And when side by side with those protestations of 1876 one sets the accomplished facts of 1899—a British military occupation of seventeen years' standing of which no one ventures to predict the end, British influence and authority paramount at Cairo, British officials in practical control of the finances, the judicial system, and, generally speaking, the whole civil administration of the country, its ruler reduced to the virtual status of an Indian feudatory Prince, and our Consul-General elevated in fact, if not in name, to that of a British Resident at that feudatory's court—it is not, one must repeat, to be wondered at that our protestations should be suspected of insincerity by the jealous foreigners, and that we should be charged with having premeditated and preconcerted what we have in fact achieved.

This idea once firmly rooted in their minds, it is easy, of course, for the more suspicious among them to distrust our appeals to the obviously fortuitous and incalculable character of some of the events which have been mainly instrumental in placing us in the position which we occupy to-day. For they are quite capable of suggesting that this apparent character is

illusory, and that the seemingly fortuitous and incalculable was in reality the cunningly conceived and the deliberately prepared. Arabi's insurrection, say they, was in all probability fomented by British *agents provocateurs*, and possibly subsidised by British gold; the pretended invitation to France to co-operate in suppressing it by the bombardment of Alexandria was an offer artfully made at a time when it was known that France could not possibly accept it; and it has always been possible to us to arrange for fresh outbreaks of Dervish turbulence, and renewed menaces to the peace of Egypt from the unquiet barbarians beyond her borders, whenever European diplomacy began to show signs of impatience for the fulfilment of our promises of withdrawal.

This, it may be said, is the mere insanity of suspicion, and of course it is not here suggested that even the French as a nation—and certainly not the sensible portion of them—would care to associate themselves with such preposterous insinuations, though, indeed, when a French ex-Minister can gravely depose in a court of military justice to his belief that a sum of 35,000,000 francs, to which Great Britain was a large contributor, was raised for the purpose of sowing dissension and spreading confusion in France in connection with the Dreyfus case, one would hesitate to say how far among educated and highly placed Frenchmen the insanity of suspicion may go. We may safely say, however, that if this new legend of "the gold of Pitt" adapted to later times wins acceptance only among a comparatively small and superlatively foolish minority of our neighbours, there are, nevertheless, many hundreds of thousands of intelligent Frenchmen—and probably no inconsiderable number of other Continental peoples—who are firmly convinced that without actually intriguing to bring about excuses for intervention in Egypt England has eagerly seized upon every such excuse as it arose; and that to this extent her previous disavowals of any designs upon the country were insincere.

To disabuse the foreign observer of this delusion would certainly be extremely difficult, perhaps, indeed, impossible; and that for the reason, that the circumstances which from the English point of view should conclusively dispose of it are precisely those whose significance it would be hopeless to convey to the mind of even the most intelligent and impartial foreigner. To do so it would be necessary to initiate him thoroughly into the mysteries of the English party system, and to get him to comprehend the enormous differences which, as regards the spirit and aim of our foreign policy and the fundamental conceptions of our Imperial interest, divide—or perhaps we should say divided, for at the present moment these differences are certainly less marked than they were wont to be—one of the two great English parties from the other. With this distinction ever present to his mind, it seems, of course, to the average Englishman that the imputation of eagerness to take advantage of the disorders of Egypt for the sake of obtaining a footing in the country can be absolutely repelled in a single sentence. We have only to say this: that the one great Egyptian crisis which brought English soldiers and civil officials to Cairo, and has kept them there ever since, occurred during a Gladstone Administration. To that answer to the charge of greedily, or even willingly fishing in troubled waters, not a single Englishman feels any necessity of adding a single word. Merely to mention the name of Mr Gladstone is to recall to our minds the most typical of all representatives of that school of British statesmen whom it is impossible even to think of in connection with the charge in question without a smile. If there was one man in all England who would be disposed to regard military intervention in Egypt as a dire embarrassment, instead of welcoming it as a golden opportunity, it was the statesman who held the reins of power in 1882. If there was one man who longed with his whole soul to be able to adhere to our avowed policy of abstention from all interference in Egyptian affairs, and regretted from the bottom of his heart the necessity which

compelled him to depart from it, it was Mr Gladstone. That he should have come into power with the policy of abstention in full force, and should have left it with his country committed by his action to responsibilities for the future of Egypt which were not only subsisting but increasing at his death sixteen years later, was doubtless regarded by him as one of the gravest political misfortunes that had befallen him in the whole of his long career.

Why Mr Gladstone should thus have found himself compelled to run counter to all his life-long convictions, and to reverse a policy of non-intervention to which he sincerely desired to adhere, is, of course, no such mystery to us in England as it is to those who either wonder at it from abroad, or solve it by the simple explanation of imputed dishonesty. We understand, as they never will or can, that in 1882 Mr Gladstone and his colleagues were simply the passive instruments of a power mightier than themselves, and obeyed an external impulse infinitely stronger either than their own prepossessions or the traditional maxims of their political school. When authority was wrested from the Khedive by a military insurrection, and there seemed to be an imminent danger lest the control of our Indian communications should pass permanently into the hands of some irresponsible revolutionary Junta, a crisis was at once perceived to have arisen of a character so gravely threatening to our Imperial interests, that no British Government, whatever its political complexion, could afford to remain inactive. Liberals, and indeed—with the exception of an insignificant and impotent minority—even Radicals, were as fully aware as Conservatives that no political party, however designated, which should allow these interests to be sacrificed would be forgiven by their countrymen; and hence it followed that in this crisis, as will always be the case in any other crisis of similar gravity, the Administration of the day were practically but passive instruments of the national will. Ministers may propose, but in all great Imperial concerns the country disposes; and, as

their "proposing" when they happen to be of the anti-Imperialist profession takes the form of a repudiation of all designs of Imperial aggrandisement beyond seas, while the "disposing" country has not the slightest objection to any extension of the territory or power of the British Empire which may be desired for its defence, it is inevitable that proposal and disposal should in certain cases be conspicuously at variance.

That is the explanation, and to ourselves the sufficient explanation, of all that has happened in Egypt during the last seventeen years. Indeed, even the French themselves can hardly deny its sufficiency as a justification of our policy in its earlier stages. If, as too many of them suspect, and not a few of them allege, we had from the first entertained the design of securing to ourselves a position of exclusive influence in, and even control over Egypt, is it conceivable that men of any—one need not say political sagacity, but political sanity—would have set about it in such a fashion? Does a Power which wishes to obtain such a position go out of its way to offer to share it with a rival? It is all very well to pretend, after the fact, a belief that our invitation of French co-operation in the suppression of Arabi's rebellion was not seriously meant, and that it was known that it could not and would not accept it. By whom and how was it known? France had joined us in the naval demonstration by which both Powers had hoped to overawe the military mutineers at Alexandria. Why, then, was it necessary, or even plausible, to assume that when the threat had failed of its desired effect, either of the two Powers, France any more than England, should hesitate to proceed from threat to action? Every one, it is true, could understand and allow for the reluctance of France to take any step which might provoke conflict in Europe, while at the same time hampering her freedom of action in dealing with it, but it was quite another thing to foresee that she would carry political caution so far over the boundary of sheer timidity as to shrink from

silencing a few shore batteries with the overwhelming artillery of the modern ironclad, and bringing a certain body of mutinous Egyptian soldiery to their senses. As a matter of fact, there were even then many Frenchmen—and these not by any means of the Chauvinist type—who bitterly deplored the pusillanimity of their Government, as there are certainly many more who deplore it now. Whether we ourselves have not good cause for self-congratulation on the withdrawal of France is another question; but if we entertain, and even give expression, as no doubt we often do, to that feeling, it is on perfectly legitimate and avowable grounds. For we may fairly congratulate ourselves, not so much on what we have gained by it, as on what we have probably escaped. It was worth undertaking the responsibility of separate intervention in order to escape from the complications of a Dual Control. The English Protectorate of Egypt may expose us to the passive hostility of France; but the *condominium* would in all probability, and in due time, have led to an open and dangerous rupture with her. That, however, as the colloquial phrase runs, is neither here nor there. The French may or may not have regarded the arrangement of the Dual Control with as little satisfaction and as much apprehension as ourselves; but if they wished to prolong it, the opportunity was legally offered to them, and they must have seen that if they did not actually wish to determine it there and then, and for ever, there was no course open to them but to stand by us that day in the harbour of Alexandria, and to assist in prosecuting our common enterprise to its close.

And for a considerable time thereafter, their abandonment of us on that occasion supplied us, as they must in common justice admit, with a perfectly sufficient answer to all their protests against our subsequent occupation of the country. No nation looks more closely at the profit and loss account, none is a keener bargainer, or more bent upon "getting its money's worth" than the French; and had the positions been reversed—

had it been they who were compelled to undertake all the risk and cost of the campaign which ended with the fall of Cairo and the restoration of the Khedive to the vacated throne—they would assuredly have scouted the notion of doing the work for nothing even more indignantly, if possible, than ourselves. If the mere fact that French blood and treasure was expended on a purely filibustering invasion of Egypt by Napoleon Bonaparte has sufficed to create that "sentimental interest" in the country which our neighbours have ever since so insistently claimed, how much more strongly would they have urged this pretension, if they had acquired such a right of doing so as was earned by England in 1882.

It was unnecessary, however, for us to justify an occupation of Egypt on this ground. Having entered the country for the purpose of suppressing a military revolt, of putting an end to civil anarchy, of re-instating a fugitive ruler in his sovereignty, and of restoring social and administrative order, it would have been not only politically absurd, but morally indefensible to quit it before the object of our intervention was attained. On the morrow of Tel-el-Kebir the work, as everything around us showed, was barely commenced. We had replaced the Khedive, it is true, upon his throne, but he was unprotected by an efficient army, his finances were in the direst confusion, and his administrative system, such as it was, had been thrown hopelessly out of gear. Again, at the very outset of our work of reconstruction, a new danger to the peace and reviving prosperity of Egypt suddenly arose. The Mahdist insurrection broke out in the Sudan, and the newly restored authority of the Khedive was threatened in a portion of his dominions by a far more formidable foe than his revolted soldiery. So grave a crisis must in any case have retarded the work to be accomplished before we could withdraw our troops from Egypt; but Mr Gladstone's policy of retreat, whatever else may be said of it, afforded even then a guarantee of our good faith. For, surely, if England had really desired to establish and

prolong her occupation of the country, her Government could not have failed to seize upon the Mahdist revolt as a pretext for extending her military undertakings and responsibilities. Even Mr Gladstone himself might have been forced to deal with it as such if he had been conscious of the same sort of pressure as that which originally forced him and his colleagues. But on this matter he was under no such compulsion. The average Englishman knew little of the Sudan, and until Gordon was sent there cared less; and with British troops holding Egypt for some thousand miles up the Nile, he was quite prepared to leave the vast unknown region beyond that point to be dealt with at Ministerial discretion. Mr Gladstone accordingly had at last, and for a time at any rate, a free hand; and the use which he made of its freedom should assuredly have convinced the most suspicious and distrustful of foreign observers that it was not the hand of a born conqueror. Its palm certainly did not itch for the "gold of new territory." Instead of exclaiming, like the true servant of his nation of hypocritical and unscrupulous land-grabbers, "Here, thank Heaven! is a rebellion so serious, that it will give us an excuse for indefinitely prolonging the British occupation of Egypt," the single, and the transparently sincere desire of the Prime Minister of that day was to give England as little fighting to do on behalf of Egypt as possible, to give her as small and as impregnable an Egypt as possible to defend, and in so doing, of course, to reduce to a minimum of power and of duration those causes which seemed most likely to detain us in military occupation of the country.

Here again, however, events conspired to defeat these intentions of, and preparations for, retirement. If Mr Gladstone in 1883 had faced the responsibility, the expense, and the effort necessary for the reconquest of the Sudan, he would beyond question have taken a course by many degrees more likely to have rendered an early evacuation of Egypt possible to us than that which he actually pursued. For, undoubtedly, it

was the perpetual pressure of that flood of Dervish barbarism upon the inadequate breakwater of Egyptian civilisation at Wady Halfa, which for years after the formal restoration of order in Egypt forbade all idea of withdrawing from her our supporting arm. It revealed, and kept ever before our eyes, the utter impossibility of leaving the country until it was provided with an efficient army; and efficient armies are not easily made, especially out of such material as alone was accessible to us. The safety of Egypt and its self-defensive power had to be assured; and it was of little avail to have rescued the country from its financial difficulties, and to have reformed and purified its administrative system, if we had left her without the strength to protect her civilisation against the assault of savagery from without.

For many years, therefore, the plea that "our work in Egypt had not yet been completed" remained a sufficient answer to the constantly recurring remonstrances of France on the non-fulfilment of our promises. Frenchmen may have been as tired as they said they were of hearing it, but it was true for all that. There was probably never a time between the fall of Khartum and the defeat of the Dervishes at Toski when there would have been any likelihood of Tewfik Pasha being able to defend his dominions with his native army. His ability to do so, indeed, was never fully established until the reconquest of the Sudan. But it would be disingenuous to contend that during the later years of the British occupation of Egypt, it was on this ground alone that our plans of ultimate withdrawal have remained unrealised. The plain truth is that since those plans were formed the whole situation has, from the international point of view, been totally transformed. When we entered Egypt, the partition of Africa among the European Powers had not begun. Since that date, however, the process has not merely commenced, but has actually gone so far that for any Power to abandon any portion of that continent of which it is in virtual possession would be equivalent to throwing it down into the field of

competition for immediate distribution among the competitors. It is preposterous to suppose that any European State would, in the present position of affairs, be guilty of an act of such gross folly. Such pledges of surrender as are being continually quoted against us presuppose in the commonest equity the maintenance, one cannot say of the *status quo ante bellum*, indeed—for there has been no war among the European Powers over the partition of Africa—but at least of the state of things which prevailed before that general "staking out of claims," as Lord Rosebery called it, on the African continent which has had results as momentous and catastrophic as any which might have come about from a series of campaigns.

There is, moreover, in addition to this general consideration, a specific cause of the most potent description, which has operated to relieve us of our engagements in this matter, and it is a cause which has arisen out of the action of the very Power by whom our alleged obligations are oftenest recalled to us. If nothing else had occurred since those undertakings were given save the adventurous journey of Major Marchand, if no other spot in Africa save Fashoda had been occupied since then by or on behalf of any other European Power, it would suffice but to mention the name of the gallant Frenchman, and of the Nile mud village which was the goal of his expedition, in order to remind ourselves and the world in general how totally the whole situation has been transformed. The Nile, from source to mouth, is a necessity of Egypt, and the State which commands the head-waters of the great river is master of her prosperity, and even of her life; and the anxious international incident in the autumn of 1898 has proved beyond the reach of controversy that, but for our advance into the Sudan and dispersal of the force of the Khalifa, that control would ultimately have passed into the hands of France. The pioneer of French advance across the Continent might doubtless have paid for his daring with his life. It is, indeed, more than probable that the Dervishes would have made short work of his small force of

Sénegalese. But the sacrifice of a brave French officer, who had demonstrated the possibility of reaching the Upper Nile from the west, and in doing so had left his countrymen the death of a national hero to avenge, could hardly fail to have had results.

As it is, the advance of France, along that line at all events, has been decisively checked, and the Treaty subsequently concluded with her deprives her of any excuse for sanctioning a repetition of Major Marchand's adventure; indeed, in giving her sanction to any such proceedings in future, she would now be committing a positive breach of public law. But it must be remembered that the practical validity of this engagement, so far as the integrity of Egypt is concerned, depends entirely on the maintenance of the existing situation on the Upper Nile. In other words, the limitation of the French sphere of influence in the Western Sudan is only of practical protective value to the Khedive if, and so long as, we remain in effective occupation of the head-waters of the Nile. What has been said above about the partition of Africa and the manner in which it has modified our international pledges and obligations is nowhere, in fact, more strikingly illustrated than in this particular region of the African continent. If at any point therein the fulfilment of an international undertaking to evacuate Egypt can be plainly seen to be a piece of absolutely Quixotic absurdity, that fact is surely nowhere more palpable than at a point at which, years after that undertaking was given, our rival has established herself as our next-door neighbour, ready to step into occupation of the tenement immediately on our vacating it.

Nor is it only a question of the partition of a continent; it is a question also of the contest for supremacy at sea. It has been argued, at considerable length and detail and with much ability, by a recent writer on Egypt, that the land of the Pharaohs for at least from five centuries before Christ onward, has been the prize of the Power which held maritime supremacy; and not only

so, but that every such Power has been compelled by an inexorable law of its destiny to make itself directly or indirectly master of the country, and that the continuance of its maritime supremacy is dependent upon its retaining its hold thereon. The theory is perhaps pushed a little too far by its ingenious author, but even if proof of its universal application to the facts is not adducible, there can be no doubt whatever that substantially and in the main it holds good. Napoleon's attempt to possess himself of Egypt was hardly more an outcome of his Eastern ambitions than of his desire for sea-sway, of that conscious need of "ships, colonies, and commerce," which he so frankly avowed to an interlocutor, in ironic ignorance of the fact that but a few hours before the words were uttered, Nelson had wiped out his navy at Trafalgar. And it is worth noting that that party in England who, without being in any sense "Little Englanders," are opposed to the continued occupation, are obliged to submit as an alternative policy a considerable addition to our naval strength in the Mediterranean, a proposal which amounts to the admission that the Power which seeks to be the strongest at sea must take special measures to prevent or to counter-balance the acquisition of Egypt by any maritime rival.

Nor is it on these accounts alone that we must recognise the change which has taken place in the situation since the morrow of Tel-el-Kebir. There is another consideration, the weight of which it is useless to ignore, though the recognition of it is almost certain to revive those charges of duplicity which have been dealt with above, and which come so readily to the lips of certain of our foreign critics. It is, that the work which we have accomplished in Egypt is almost yearly making it more and more clear to every intelligent observer that its very efficiency and success must render it impossible for us to lay it aside. In the days when we talked lightly of restoring order in Egypt, we had but a vague notion of the kind of *régime* which we were setting to work to establish. As long, however, as we mentally figured it to our-

selves in the light of an only half-Europeanised sphere of administration, possessing but just enough of purity to be slightly superior to the average Oriental satrapy, and just enough of stability to enable us to leave it without too grave qualms of conscience to take its chance of enduring, all was well enough. Had we been content with that, there would have been little or no difficulty in our fulfilling our promise of withdrawal. But *le mieux est l'ennemi du bien.* Our reconstructive work has gone far beyond that: it has ended by setting up in Egypt a system of government little if at all inferior to that which we have established in India, and requiring, consequently, a good deal more than the native abilities of Egypt to work it. We should not for a moment entertain the idea of handing over the duties discharged by us towards the population of our great Eastern dependency to exclusively native hands; and it would be a no less rash experiment to surrender the conduct of the Egyptian administrative machine to the Egyptian people. Had we had the least suspicion in 1882 that we should finish our work of reform by giving Egypt a Government which is practically up to the Anglo-Indian standard, we should certainly never have talked as glibly as we did of retiring from the country "as soon as our work was accomplished"; for we should have known that in that case our work was never likely to be accomplished at all.

In this connection the remarks made in the Report for 1898 by Lord Cromer—whom no one could accuse of a disposition to under-rate the self-governing capacity of the Egyptian—have much significance:—

> As each successive year of the British occupation passes by, two facts acquire an ever-increasing degree of prominence. The first is, that the present *régime*, which has now lasted for fifteen years, has conferred, and is still conferring the utmost benefit on the Egyptians, and on all who are concerned in the welfare of Egypt. The second is, that whatever be the defects of that *régime*—and it cannot be doubted that, whether the matter be regarded from the English or Egyptian point of view, it possesses certain

defects—the circumstances are such as to render it impossible to substitute any preferable system of government in its place. A satisfactory solution is certainly not to be found in any preventative movement in the direction of more effective Egyptian autonomy, or in internationalising the Egyptian Government, or, lastly, in any combination of either of these two spheres.

For the present, what Egypt most requires, and for many years to come will require, is an honest, just, and orderly Administration, and the establishment of the supremacy of the law in the widest sense of the term on so firm a footing as to render practically impossible any return to that personal system of government which, ten years ago, was well nigh the ruin of the country, as it has been that of so many Oriental States. It is conceivable that at some future time the Egyptian Government may pass from the administrative into the political stage, and that a moment will arrive when the method of government may be discussed with advantage to all the interests, whether foreign or native, which are concerned. For the present, however, that moment would appear to be distant.

Is there, in any country of Europe, any competent observer, pronouncing in good faith and not being blinded by self-interest, who will seriously question the forecast of the British Consul-General? The institutions which we have given to Egypt are such as are impossible to be sustained without the continued support of those who introduced them. They are not workable without British initiative, British supervision, British control in every department of the State. That is the verdict of every official in the country, and of every impartial critic who has ever studied the country. It is recognised even by France herself, who proposes Internationalism as an indispensable substitute for English control, that Egypt would quickly relapse into anarchy if the upholding hand of the State which is at present directing her destinies were withdrawn. So long as that fact remains patent and acknowledged, the Egyptian Question will remain still, as Lord Cromer puts it, in the "administrative stage."

And well may he say that the moment when it will pass into the "political stage," and permit the method of government in Egypt to be discussed with advantage, would appear to be distant. As a matter of fact, it is relatively almost as

distant as the moment at which we shall be able to hand over India to the rule of its native populations. For if it is urged that the difficulty of training Eastern races up to a Western standard of administrative ability and integrity is complicated in India by inequalities of strength among those races themselves, and the consequent danger of the more Occidentalised, but weaker among them, falling under the dominion of one of the ruder but more warlike Oriental peoples, the answer is that this danger would find a quite sufficiently apt analogue in the perpetual exposure of an "independent" Egypt, endowed with an administrative system too advanced for its own governing capacities, to the interference of one or other ambitious Western Power. It seems, indeed, to have been forgotten that the rivalry among these Powers has been almost unintermittent ever since the rise of Mehemet Ali, that it was reaching an acute stage when it was temporarily abated by the expedient of the Anglo-French *condominium*—an expedient, however, which would itself have been the fruitful parent of future trouble—and that our retirement from the country would mean nothing but the renewal of this rivalry in a fiercer form than ever. We might cloak it as we pleased by such a phrase as "internationalisation," but the naked truth of the resumed struggle between Great Britain and France for predominance over the country would be plainly visible underneath. As matters stand, our predominance by virtue of the veiled protectorate over Egypt stands on a basis of accomplished facts, and so long as it remains unchallenged, Europe is all the quieter in consequence.

The question for us is, whether it is likely to be challenged, and if so, by whom? Is there any Power, excepting France—and even here we must distinguish between the France of politics and the France of commerce and finance—which is dissatisfied with the position of England in Egypt? Is there one State—and here we do not except France—in which it is not recognised that the financial and

political stability which we have substituted in Egypt for the older conditions of internal disquietude and international intrigue is a benefit to the entire European community? There is none. It is a benefit which is acknowledged by the citizens of every country in Europe, and not more emphatically anywhere than by that influential body of French financiers who are so largely interested in the debt of Egypt, and who have more than once interposed to restrain their own Government when tension was threatening the relations between Downing Street and the Quai D'Orsay. It is the French party politician, and he alone, who clamours for the withdrawal of Great Britain, and periodically denounces this country for its alleged "violation of its pledges." Two wrongs, of course, do not make a right, and the *argumentum ad hominem* is only by courtesy an argument at all. Still, the English law gives a certain recognition to it as a plea in abatement, and diplomacy, which proceeds somewhat by the same methods of pleading as the law, may claim or give effect to it also. Though two wrongs do not make a right, the author of a wrong may find himself precluded by the maxim that "he who seeks equity must do equity" from effectually protesting against the wrong of another. And the common-law doctrine of "estoppel," whereby a man's previous statements or admissions are held to forbid him some contention which would be otherwise open to him, is an excellent instance of the application of the *argumentum ad hominem* in legal procedure. We have a perfect right to maintain that France is estopped by her own record in Tunis from taking up the position which she claims to assume with regard to our relations with Egypt.

How complete this estoppel is, is hardly realised perhaps by those who are familiar enough with the general outline of the Tunisian affair. The French expedition landed in Tunis —to cite Mr White's careful summary of the whole transaction —on the 30th April 1881, regardless of the protests of the Bey against the invasion of his sovereign rights. No serious opposi-

tion was offered. On the 12th May of that year a French Protectorate was established by a treaty, the second Article of which ran thus:—"*Cette occupation cessera lorsque les autorités militaires et tunisiennes auront reconnu d'un commun accord que l'administration locale est en état de garantir le maintien de l'ordre.*"

France set up the contention, which is supported by many international proofs, that the Bey was an independent sovereign; but this the British Government disputed. Lord Granville, indeed, had written nearly a year before the occupation: "In the view of Her Majesty's Government, Tunis is a portion of the Ottoman Empire."

In various forms and at various periods France has given repeated assurances, both Parliamentary and diplomatic, that she had no design of conquest or annexation, and that the occupation was to be temporary. Some weeks before the occupation, M. Barthélemy Saint Hilaire said to Lord Lyons that "the annexation of Tunis by France would be a mistake and a misfortune." A few days later M. Jules Ferry, the President of the Council, declared in the Chamber of Deputies: "*Le Gouvernement de la République ne cherche pas de conquêtes; il n'en a pas besoin.*"

Again, on the 10th of May, the French Foreign Minister, M. Saint Hilaire, begged our Ambassador "to report at once to Her Majesty's Government in the name of the Republic and his own name, and in the most formal and explicit manner, the assurance that the French Government did not intend to annex Tunis. If it should be found necessary to occupy for a time certain points in the Regency with French troops, the occupation, His Excellency said, would be of an essentially provisional character, and would cease at once as soon as sufficient security had been obtained for the punctual execution by the Bey of the new arrangements which would be effected by the treaty which he would be required to make." And on the same date —two days before the Treaty was signed—the same authority informed General Cialdini that "all the Bizerta territory"

would be evacuated "as soon as the Bey's good faith and respect for the Treaty is secured." The Treaty of Bardo itself was equally explicit. Its avowed object was to secure the re-establishment of order and the safety of the French frontier of Algeria.

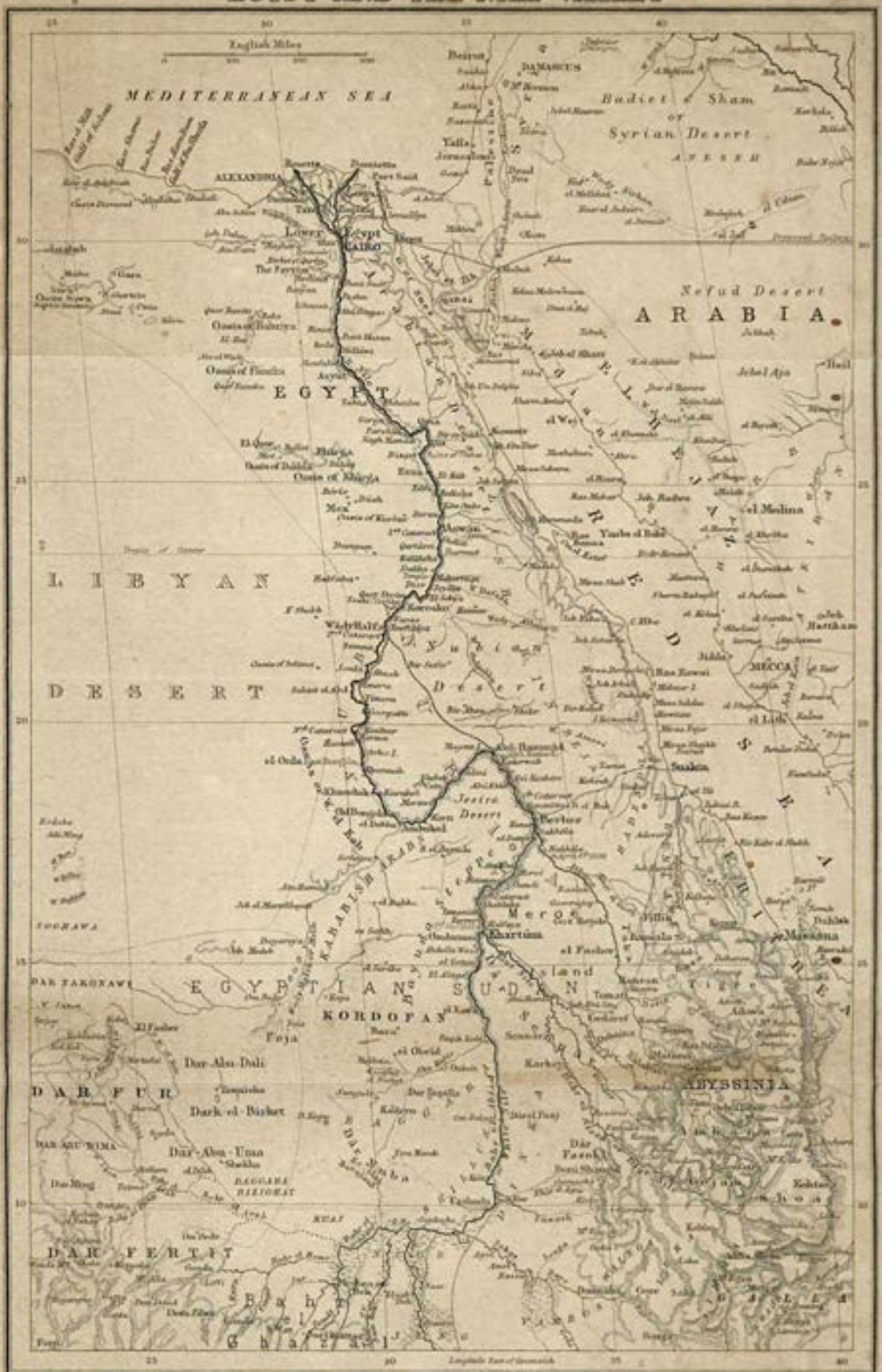
The Sultan and the Bey protested. Italy protested, and looked to Great Britain for support. A French army of 30,000 men was in possession of the country; and France, immediately after the occupation became an accomplished fact, made frank confession of her intention to establish a Protectorate with all its consequences.

Not only so, but, unofficially at any rate, it has been admitted by a French Foreign Minister that the cases of Tunis and Egypt are strictly parallel. His words were: "*Je suis absolument de votre avis sur le rôle d'Angleterre en Égypte. Vous n'avez qu'à faire ce que nous avons fait à Tunis, où les choses marchent bien. C'est l'intérêt de votre grand pays en même temps que l'intérêt de la civilisation et de l'humanité.*"

Most assuredly it is not within the province of France to press for the "fulfilment of our pledges," and if France cannot act as spokesman of the demands of Europe, there is certainly no other Power likely to volunteer for the office. But in truth the so-called demands of Europe in this matter are purely imaginary. Or rather it might be plausibly contended that, in so far as the general attitude of the Powers is not one of complete indifference, they have given us their tacit mandate to remain in Egypt, and to answer there for civil order and financial solvency in what was formerly and would again become, a bankrupt and distracted State. This was and had been their disposition for several years before the reconquest of the Sudan, and that most significant step on the part of the protecting Power unalterably confirmed it. There is no Continental Government or people who fail to perceive that the restoration to Egypt of that vast tract of territory which was rent sixteen years ago from the dominions of the Khedive

—that territory which, if not possessed by her, would leave her prosperity at the mercy of whosoever did possess it—has revealed new responsibilities which Great Britain alone can discharge. Nor can there be any one among them who doubts that, whatever efforts may be made either by diplomacy or by arms to dislodge her, she will never suffer herself to be driven from this post of duty by anything short of the overthrow of her naval supremacy and the collapse of her Empire.

# EGYPT AND THE NILE VALLEY

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